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Fort Erie Times

Thursday, December 03, 2015

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Shoebox Project
A gift of love that helps women in need. 2

A passion for music
Teacher and business owner has a unique story to share. 5

Christmas tradition
Fort Erie Public Library collecting mittens and books so every kid can have a special holiday. 5

A helping hand from Ms. Claus

Photo By Austin Gooder/Special To The Timest

Claus was busy helping decorate cookies with kids like six-year-old Kaylie. The Optimist-Omettes club in Fort Erie has been running their Christmas Fantasyland since 2001. Visits with Santa, cookie decoration, secret raffles and more are all part of the party. Christmas Fantasyland will be open at the Optimist hall on Gilmour Rd. on Dec. 4; 5 and 6. Donations for COPE are gratefully accepted. Please see Page 9 for more photos.

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Shoeboxes filled with gifts help women in need

Sarah Ferguson
Fort Erie Times

The Shoebox Project is not just about giving out presents.

It's about sending a powerful message to someone in need.

Caroline Mulroney Lapham, who co-founded the Shoebox Project, said each box that is given to a woman in need tells them "someone in your community believes that you are special, that you are important, and that you deserve to be happy."

"I think Caroline Mulroney's quote says it all," Alison Earl, a Crystal Beach resident, said.

"All of the boxes that are given to Niagara women are gifts made with love. I think that's the idea of what the shoebox project is all about."

Earl has been organizing and collecting items for the Shoebox Project for Shelters in Niagara for the past two years.

The Shoebox Project for Shelters is a non-profit initiative that collects small gifts and gives them to women living in shelters. The boxes collected by Earl will be distributed to Women's Place of South Niagara.

The Shoebox Project for Shelters began in 2011 when Caroline, Jessica, Vanessa and Katy Mulroney made it their mission to collect and distribute gifts packaged in shoeboxes to women in shelters across Canada to raise awareness about the risks women and face that can lead to homelessness.

Since the project was created, the initiative has delivered over 17,000 gifts to women in 72 communities.

With the holiday season quickly approaching, Earl has already begun collecting shoeboxes filled with a variety of items including gloves, hats, scarves, chocolate, hairbrushes, makeup, toiletries and pbone cards.

When asked what should be collected and put in the boxes, Earl says "something warm, something sweet, something a woman needs and things a woman likes to receive."

Earl is hoping members of the community will fill a shoebox with at least $50 word of items.

Donations will be collected until Dec. 18 so the boxes can be delivered to shelters in time for Christmas.

For more information about the Shoebox Project, Earl encourages people to visit online at www.shoeboxproject.com or e-mail Earl at niagara@shoeboxproject.com.

sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca

Drop off locations

- **Yoga Joy,** 395 Derby Rd., Crystal Beach
- **Boggio and Edwards IDA. 207 Ridge Rd.,** Ridgeway
- **Dr. Ordinario,** 1138 Garrison Rd., Fort Erie
- **F8 Hair Salon,** 31 Jarvis St., Fort Erie
- **Investors Group,** 4838 Dorchester Rd., Niagara Falls

Sarah Ferguson/Fort Erie Times

Shoebox Project for Shelters Co-coordinator Alison Earl is asking residents to fill boxes with personal items for women in need. The boxes can be dropped off at several local businesses and will be distributed to the Women's Place of South Niagara.

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Festival makes spirits bright

Sarah Ferguson
Fort Erie Times

Downtown Ridgeway is buzzing with holiday cheer.

The 20th annual Spirit of Christmas Festival will take place this weekend and Jesse Boles, the festival's organizer, says there's something for everyone.

The Ridgeway Business Improvement Area Association is inviting the community to celebrate the holidays during the three-day festival, beginning on Friday at 5 p.m., with school choirs, a candlelight stroll, horse and buggy rides, photos with Santa and hot chocolate.

The festival will continue Saturday beginning with breakfast with Santa at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 230 at 228 South Mill St., and more choirs and fun throughout downtown Ridgeway.

For the first time, the festival has been extended to Sunday. There will be a non-denominational service led by Pastor David Stephenson at the Village Square at 11 a.m.

Boles encourages families to attend the festival over the course of the weekend.

"It's a free weekend of family fun and entertainment and it gives businesses a chance to showcase the unique items they have at the same time," Boles said.

"It's also a chance to for people to get outside and see the best of what Ridgeway has to offer before the winter really sets in."

Anyone who wishes to place a purchase an ornament in memory of a loved one to decorate the Christmas tree in the Village Square can purchase one at Lasting Impressions. The proceeds from the memory tree will support the I'm Not Lost Clothesline Project in downtown Ridgeway. The imitative provides people in need with warm winter hats, gloves, and scarves.

A full list of events and a program will be available in downtown businesses on the first day of the festival.

For more information visit online at www.ridgewayont.ca

sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca

Choir Schedule

Friday, Dec. 4

- St George Catholic Elementary School, 5:15 p.m.
- Crystal Beach Public School, 6 p.m.
- Ridgeway Public School, 6:45 p.m.
- Bertie Public School, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 5

- Stevensville Public School, 11:45 a.m.
- Garrison Road Public School, noon
- Fort Erie Secondary School, 1:30 p.m.
- Niagara Christian Community of Schools, 2:15 p.m.

File Photo Fort Erie Times

Vivian Reibel had her picture take with Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus during last year's Spirit of Christmas Festival.

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Competition No. 52-2015

The Corporation is now accepting applications for student employment opportunities in the **summer of 2016.** You must be attending a post-secondary institution. **Returning students MUST apply.** For more information and to apply, visit **http://www.town.forterie.ca/,** go to Government, then Employment, click on Summer Student and complete the on-line application. The deadline for receiving applications is 5:00 p.m. Friday, January 22, 2016.

We will conduct interviews in February 2016.

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Challenge issued

Submitted photo

Last week, the FESS Class of '86 dropped of a $1,500 donation towards the Embrace Greatness fundraising efforts toward the new centre for the arts fundraising efforts. They have issued a challenge to all graduating classes from both FESS and RCBHS. To date classes from 1985, 1986, 1990, 1991, 2005 have set up GoFundMe accounts to raise funds for the new theatre. For more information or to donate check out www.GFEcentreforthearts.com. Here they are from left to right:Present for the cheque presentation were: Steve Horst, Dianne Flake, Lori Lampitt, Joe Infurna, Kristen Brooks, Nancy Niznik, Shawn O'Connor, and Mark Harvey.

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Sarah Ferguson/Fort Erie Times

Fort Erie's Paul Saccone recently opened the Fort Erie Music Academy on Jarvis Street.

A passion for music

Sarah Ferguson
Fort Erie Times

Ever since the day Paul Saccone took his first music lesson, he has had a passion for music that knows no limits.

"I saw this quote and since then, it has really stuck with me. 'Music speaks when words fail.' I think that is so true," Saccone said.

"I think music is the biggest form of communication."

Saccone decided he wanted to share his love of music by teaching others to play piano and guitar. He recently achieved his dream when he opened the doors to his new business—The Fort Erie Music Academy—on Jarvis Street.

Saccone's journey to become a business owner and a music teacher is a unique story.

Although most people don't realize it, Saccone has Autism.

When he was three years old, Saccone's parents were advised that he should be placed in an institution where his needs could be better met.

Today, Saccone stands proud as a productive citizen in society with something to share with the community.

He credits his doctors, teachers and his mom, Melissa, who helped shape him into the man he has become today.

"My mom is my rock. Without her, none of this would have been possible," he said.

Saccone also found support through Community Living Fort Erie. The organization provides support for people with intellectual challenges.

"Community Living has always been a huge part of my life," Saccone said. "They help people with Autism, like me, and countless others with similar disabilities."

It's because of his support system, and the people who wouldn't take no for an answer,

Even though he has been diagnosed with Autism, Saccone said he "downplays it."

"It's not that having Autism is not important. Everyone has something and this is what I have," he said.

"I want to do it because I can, not because someone said I shouldn't be able to do it."

Saccone is a graduate of Lakeshore Catholic High School. In 2006, he took an interest in the high school's music department and joined the junior concert band, which evolved into a commitment that would become a large part of his life over the course of the next five years. Saccone also joined the school's jazz band in his senior years and later became a mentor for the school's junior jazz band.

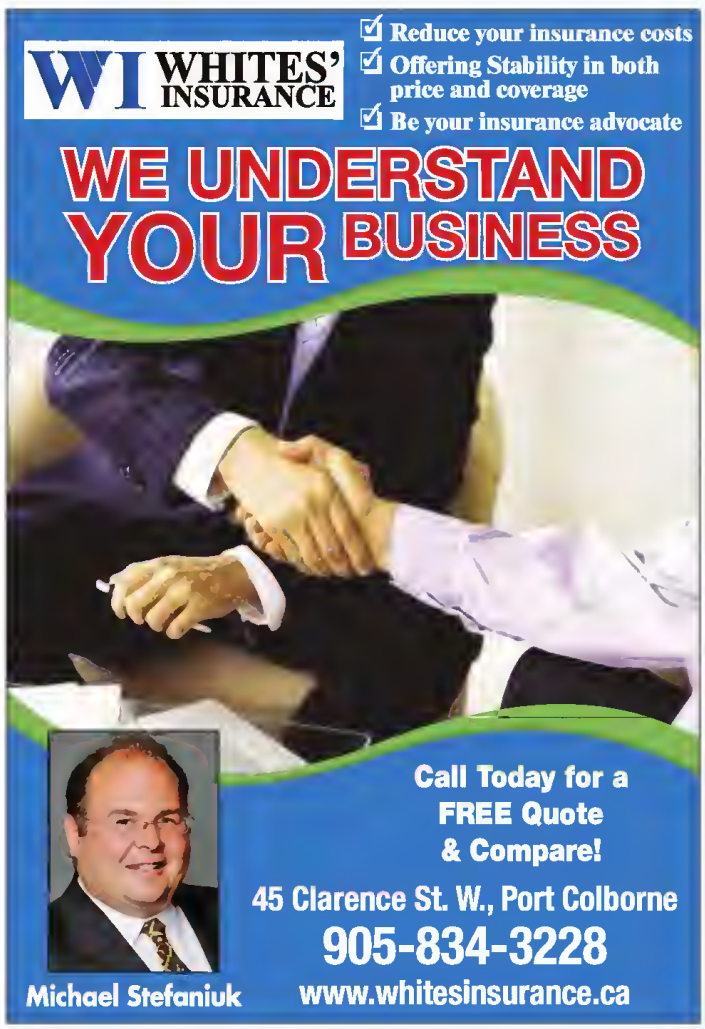
He also took an interest in the musical productions through Lakeshore, performing in Footloose and Happy Days. He also was accepted into a role in Jesus Christ Superstar through the school board. Saccone received the Silver Standing at Music Fest Canada while performing with the Lakeshore Concert Band.

He has performed at a variety of venues including Walt Disney World, the Grand Olde Opry and Graceland.

He also studied formal music lessons through the Ontario Conservatory of Music and continues to be mentored by Colin Kelly, who ran the Ontario Conservatory of Music until it closed in Fort Erie.

For more information about the Fort Erie Music Academy, call Saccone at 289-686-4951 or e-mail forteriemusicacademy@gmail.com.

sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca



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The Fort Erie Times

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Point of View

UN climate gabfest all smoke and mirrors

The best way to think of the 12-day United Nations' climate meeting which starts today in Paris is to recall the story of the emperor's new clothes.

With 50,000 official and unofficial participants and scores of world leaders attending -- including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and various and sundry premiers -- it will generate a gigantic carbon footprint.

We know it's going to be declared a success in advance because, with so many world leaders attending, that's mandatory, regardless of what the new global warming treaty produced there actually achieves.

In the real world, the UN has been holding these giant and expensive talkfests in the world's most popular tourist destinations since 1992, while greenhouse gas emissions linked to climate change continue to rise.

They're going up in the U.S., where President Barack Obama pretends to be a "green" leader by blocking the Keystone XL pipeline, while approving enough new oil and gas pipelines to more than encircle the earth.

They're going up in China, India and across Asia. In 2012, the World Resources Institute identified 1,200 new coal-fired electricity plants -- the single greatest source of rising global greenhouse gas emissions -- planned for 59 countries, 75% in China and India.

REUTERS Photo

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, French President Francois Hollande, Brazil's President Dilma Roussef, and Chile's President Michelle Bachelet attend attend a meeting to launch the 'Mission Innovation: Accelerating the Clean Energy Revolution' on the opening day of the World Climate Change Conference 2015 (COP21) at Le Bourget, near Paris, France.

They're going up in Canada, although Trudeau will be treated like a rock star by the UN poobahs and hangers-on.

That because he's going to genuflect before the UN and throw another couple of billion dollars of taxpayers' money at its $100 billion climate mitigation fund, earmarked for developing countries.

Trudeau will come to this meeting declaring, again, that "Canada is back" from the Stephen Harper years, even though his emission reduction target is the same as Harper's.

Trudeau promises to reduce Canada's emissions to 17% below 2005 levels by 2020 and 30% by 2030, which would require shutting down the equivalent of 58% of Canada's oil and gas sector within five years and 100% within 15.

That's no more doable than the average of 6% below 1990 emissions between 2008 and 2012 that the previous Liberal government committed Canada to, which would have required Harper in 2006 to shut down the equivalent of Canada's transportation sector within two years.

But why let the facts get in the way of another UN talkfest?

Do You Remember?

Our thanks to Amanda Passero who phoned in to identify her dad and aunts in last week's photo. The Passero children had their faces pressed up against the toy display in the window of Withell Cycle and Sports on Central Avenue. In the photo, left to right: Bonnie Passero, Sherry Passero and Amanda's dad Ricky Passero. This is a favourite photo for Amanda who keeps a copy of it on her cell phone.

This week we have a photo of the Kinette float in the Santa Claus parade. We bet that some of you clipped this photo and kept it as your child was on the float waving to the crowd. Let us know who they are by calling the Museum at 905-894-5322 or e-mail us at museum@forterie.on.ca.

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OUR LETTERS POLICY

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A pothole story

Earl Plato
When Nature Recalls

Potholes. What do you know about them? I first met potholes in Niagara Glen as a young boy. The late Fort Erie naturalist Bert Miller took us there several times. Bert loved the Glen.

In the view below Bert lowered me through the pot hole and my father caught me. It was about eight foot or 2.4 metres drop. We were at the bottom of the giant pothole looking up.

I remember Bert told us how potholes were formed. At a Bert Miller Nature Club meeting last year we heard Winn Laar of the Niagara Falls Nature Club. Winn loves Niagara Glen Gorge. In her excellent presentation, she revealed her strong love for that site. It's that impression of Winn's that had prompted me to write this article. Thanks Win.

Writer's Note:

My research is mainly from the book Our Romantic Niagara by the late Albert H. Tiplin. Tiplin was a great science teacher at Stamford Collegiate. Friend, Flo Everett, remembered him as her favourite teacher. I believe that Tiplin's scientific research about the '

Niagara Falls area is second to none. It is there I found much of my answers to potholes. Tiplin said, "What could cause a pothole?" His answer was – a pot boiler. Think of a hard rock shaped like a large softball. Tiplin found one in the Glen in a conical twisted hole. Back in time a thundering cascade of water falls from a great height. There was a small depression on the bed of the river. Add more or less a rounded boulder some gravel and sharp sand. Then let nature take its course over time — a long time. The boulder swirls by the powerful streams of water with the abrasive sand that cuts a pot in the softer bedrock. You have a pothole created. I believe many are in our Niagara river near the Falls.

Note: Ontario has many locations where pothole phenomena are found. Warsaw Caves near Peterborough and Rockwood Conservation Area near Orangeville. Worth checking out.

***

Bats in the belfry? Local historian Rick Dell has climbed up many church belfreys in the area. Looking for bats,

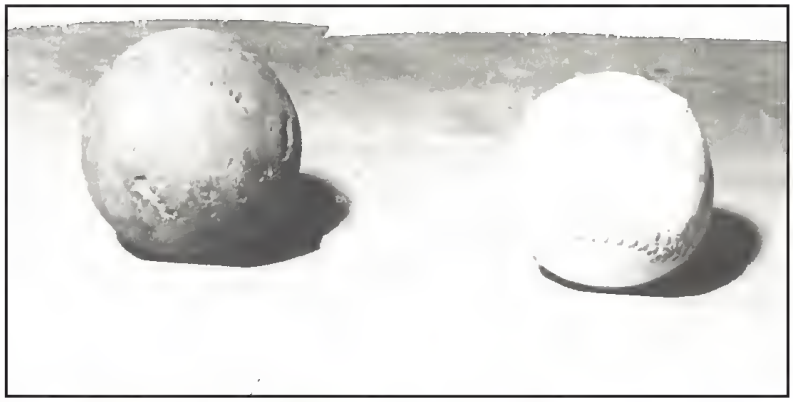
Rick? No. Rick is a bell man. He's interested in old bells that have not been used. This is not easy work. Steep ladder climbing and who knows what he might meet. However, this little article is about overwintering bats.

Winters in Ontario are inhospitable times for bats. First cold then the absence of food, mainly insects.

Bats to the north hibernate in our Canadian Shield in caves and old mines. Here in the south we have two main species that hibernate, the Little Brown and the Big Brown bat. Find a safe place to hibernate. Old barns, old empty houses and church belfries. Our local bats enter an inactive state known as Torpor. Its metabolism slows down.

We are told that we should not disturb bats during hibernation. They may not recover as they may not be able to raise their body temperature fast enough.

So Rick don't disturb the bats.



Tiplin's Pot boiler along side a softball

Giant pothole in Niagara Glen

A different sort of Christmas

Amy Roebuck
Special to The Times

Shopping, decorating or other preparations often distract us from the enjoyment of the season. We recommend two ways to slow down and capture the spirit of the season. The first is with music. On Tuesday, December 8, the Fort Erie Public Library will present the Niagara Men's Chorus in a program of vocal music based on their concert series "A Different Sort of Christmas."

The concert will be held at the Stevensville Hall beginning at 7 p.m. Admission is $5, and seasonal refreshmentsare included. Please call the Library at 905-382-2051 or 905-871-2546 to reserve tickets, or ask at any library branch. Niagara Men's Chorus is a diverse group of more than thirty men from all walks of life. Members are dedicated to musical growth, good fellowship and public service through performance. Ransomis the conductor and Fran Spoar is the accompanist of the group. There will also be an interlude of seasonal poetry during the concert, featuring Brenda Bennett. On Friday, December 11, the chorus of Garrison Road Public School will perform a concert of seasonal music at the Centennial branch, beginning at 11:00 a.m. This will be followed by a short program of piano music for the holidays with Jim Moore. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Another way to enter the spirit of the season is by reading — relaxing with a good book. Many well-known authors have set aside their usual characters or genres, to offer a seasonal read. Recent releases include J. D. Robb's *Festive in Death Winter Street: a novel* Elin Hildebrand. For middle years readers, there are several new books with a holiday theme, including *A Short History of Christmas* Sally Lee and Enid Blyton's *Christmas Stories.* Terry Pratchett's *Dragons at Crumbling Castle* a holiday chapter, too. Little ones will enjoy *Dear Santa, Love Rachel Rosenstein* Amanda Peet, Rachel Isadora's *Bea in the Nutcracker The Gingerbread Man Loose at Christmas* Laura Murray.

We also hope that your preparations include knitting or shopping, because the mitten trees and book baskets at all Library branches still have room for donations of items that can warm the hands, heads and hearts of youngsters in our community during the holiday season. Donations will be distributed through the Kinsmen Gift of Love, the Salvation Army, St.Vincent de Paul at St. George's Church and other area churches.

Amy Roebuck is the community services coordinator at the Fort Erie Public Library. For information on holiday movies, books, hours and more at the Fort Erie Public Library, please visit the website at www.fepl.ca, our Facebook page or Twitter.

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Santa makes his way to Fort Erie

LET'S GROW TOGETHER

A look back at the week in Niagara

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Christmas Fantasyland

Photos by Austin Gooder/Special To The Timest

Left: Julia, 8, and Jackson, 6, were able to tell Santa what they wanted for Christmas, but not before he reminded them that Santa's always watching. Right: Christmas Fantasyland will be open at the Optimist hall on Gilmour Rd. on Dec. 4; 5 and 6.

Health Corner

How a trip to the Dentist could mean a better night's sleep: Part Two

Last time, we discussed how sleeping problems like obstructive sleep apnea can affect your overall health and how your dentist can help in detecting these problems given the multitude of oral indicators of someone suffering from obstructive sleep apnea. To review, these manifestations include:

- Enlarged scalloped tongue
- Pain on palpation of the jaw joints
- Jaw joint sounds when opening or closing the mouth
- Crowding of teeth
- Wear patterns on teeth

Through a thorough clinical examination, your dentist can detect these signs that may encourage him/her to refer you to your medical doctor for further investigation of potential sleep apnea through a sleep test. If the sleep test confirms that you indeed have obstructive sleep apnea, there are a number of treatment options available to help optimize the amount of air travelling to your lungs so that you can breathe properly during your sleep. The three treatment options include:

1. CPAP machine
2. Surgery
3. Oral appliance therapy

Dr. John Inigo

CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) therapy involves the use of a machine that opens up the airway by using positive air pressure. It involves the use of a nasal mask that must be connected to the patient at all times during sleep. However, studies show that compliance with CPAP machines is poor. This may be due to a number of problems associated with its use. These include trauma to the bridge of the nose by the mask, bloating of the stomach, and nasal congestion. Also, the device is not mobile and therefore restricts movement during sleep. The other treatment option for obstructive sleep apnea is surgery. Surgery can be effective in removing anatomical obstructions such as enlarged tonsils, however studies show it is only 30-50% effective.

The third treatment option is the use of an oral appliance, supplied to you by your dentist. The goal of oral appliance therapy is to reposition the lower jaw and tongue in order to create a favourable environment for air to flow to the lungs. Success rates have been as high as 76% in treating mild to moderate cases of obstructive sleep apnea. The advantages include:

- Non-invasive treatment
- Less noticeable than CPAP machine
- Reversible therapy
- High patient compliance

If you have trouble sleeping at night, wake up tired in the morning, or your partner complains of your snoring throughout the night, talk to your dentist or family doctor about the possibility of obstructive sleep apnea. The first step in getting better sleep is identifying the problem and this can only be done by consulting either your dentist or family doctor. Just think, a visit to your dentist could mean a good night's sleep in the future.

Dr. John Inigo is a practicing general dentist in Fort Erie and Ridgeway, Ontario. He can be reached at Inigo Bertie Dentistry, 905 871.2903 or Inigo Ridgeway Dentistry, 905.894 5555.For further information and discussion, please visit his office at www.inigodentistry.com.

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Clothesline project aims to keep residents warm

Sarah Ferguson
Fort Erie Times

It's happened to everyone. You leave the house for the day and the moment you reach for your gloves, you realized they are missing.

"Anybody can find themselves out in the cold; waiting for the school bus, or walking downtown," Lori Dawn Antaya said.

The People's Memorial United Church Women's Group wanted to help anyone who finds him or herself in the cold without a hat, gloves or scarves, so they decided to start the I'm Not Lost Clothesline Project. Each week, the women place a handful of handmade or purchased winter clothing in Ziplock bags and tie a tag to each one.

Each tag says the same thing: "I'm not lost. If you find yourself out in the cold, take me along. I'll keep you warm."

The small packages are hung outside on a line in front of People's Memorial Church and are free for anyone to take.

"It's a neat idea that other people have started doing in other communities. People have tied scarves and hats to monuments in Ottawa. I thought we could do it too," Antalya explained.

It's a project that will continue over the course of the winter. Eventually, Antaya said she hopes to see local businesses all over Fort Erie have a clothesline with free winter wear available for people who need it.

Sarah Ferguson/Fort Erie Times

Lori Dawn Antaya invites members of the community to help the People's Memorial United Church Women's Group to make hats, gloves and scarves, which will be strung on a line for people to take as they need them.

Members of the United Church Women's Group meet weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. It's a drop-in group, so members come whenever they can, bringing items with them to create care packages to be strung outside in front of the church.

""It's the perfect opportunity to sit around, drink a cup of coffee, and knit," Antaya said.

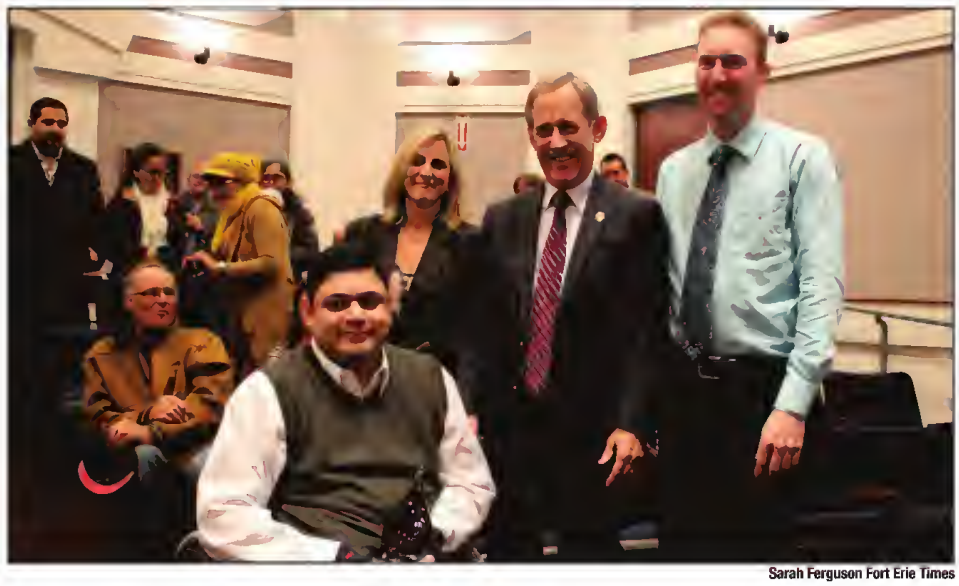
Everyone is welcome to join and Antaya said she would be happy to teach people how to make handmade gloves, bats and scarves.

"I will teach people how to knit. I bring all of my knitting needles and crochet books."

If anyone would like to donation ribbons, zip lock bags or clothing to the project, they are asked to contact Antaya. For more information about the I'm Not Lost Clothesline Project e-mail Antaya at mantaya@cogeco.ca.

sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca

Resident honoured for making Fort Erie more accessible



Sarah Ferguson Fort Erie Times

Fort Erie's Dennis Hernandez-Galeano received a special award from the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. The one-time award marks the 10th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It also recognizes individuals who demonstrate leadership and raise awareness for accessibility and disability issues in their communities. Hernandez-Galeano was presented with the award last Monday night at town hall. From left, is Hernandez-Galeano, with municipal clerk Bev Bradman, Mayor Wayne Redekop and Ward 2 Coun. Stephen Passero.

Sarah Ferguson
Fort Erie Times

Fort Erie's Dennis Hernandez-Galeano was a teenager when he suffered a spinal cord injury that left him unable to walk.

But he never let his physical disability get in the way of accomplishing his goals, said Bev Bradnam, who serves as a staff resource on the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Hernandez-Galeano has played an important role in making Fort Erie a more accessible place for people who have disabilities.

Hernandez-Galeano has served as a member of the Town of Fort Erie's Accessibility Advisory Committee in various roles since it was founded in 2002. He is currently chairman of the committee.

Working with the accessibility committee, Hernandez-Galeano has assisted in removing barriers for people with disabilities at parks, on walkways, and beaches.

Last Monday, Hernandez-Galeano was recognized as the recipient of an award for his commitment in the promotion and awareness of accessibility and inclusiveness in Fort Erie.

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the provincial legislation that was the catalyst for accessibility standards that affect daily life for many people, the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario announced an award for accessibility Champions. The one-time award recognizes individuals who demonstrate leadership and raise awareness for accessibility and disability issues in their communities.

The awards are were presented to 101 deserving individuals in the province last week.

Bradnam said Hernandez-Galeano is deserving of the award because he "continually sets the bar high."

"He is very humble and he downplays his assistance but without his help, many things our committee has done would not have been accomplished."

He is an active member of the Greater Fort Erie Youth Soccer Club, serving as a board member and soccer coach.

"Dennis has been instrumental in getting walkways constructed or repaired in public parks, particularly where there are soccer fields," Bradnam said.

Hernandez-Galeano "has been the key catalyst" to improvements made at Oakes Park, Optimist Park, Service Ontario, the Stevensville Canada Post Office, improvements to traffic signals at intersections and the inclusion of audible crossing signals.

Recently, Hernandez-Galeano worked with the Niagara Parks Commission to create accessible pathways to monuments to ensure veterans can fully participate in Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Hernandez- Galeano, who said he was honoured to receive the award, thanked his mother and all of the people who have supported him in his endeavor to make the community a more accessible place.

"I can't take much credit. This is a team effort," Hernandez- Galeano said about what the accessibility committee does.

"I'm humbled and overwhelmed."

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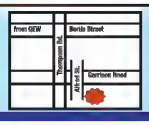

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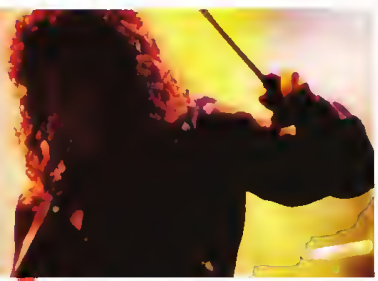

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From the gardener's journal

Ruth Vold Markle
Special to The Times

This was the week of departures and arrivals.

My beloved sister and her two huge suitcases left early Monday morning for the sunny south for the winter.

We wish her a grand time with family and grand babies. But then I arrived at the greenhouse Tuesday morning to see Mickey Mouse hauling bis own large suitcase behind and two little ones scampering after him. Indeed, in spite of all my efforts to naturally and safely protect that space, he's back.

That's a sure sign of colder weather to me.

When the squirrels begin to leave post-it notes in the trees, the birds are singing so merrily as they collect the seed heads of the perennials and the waves of Lake Erie begin to move heavy stones around. And Mickey and family move into the grenehouse. I think I must face reality.

Yes, the colder winds and 'fluffy rain' will be coming.

Embracing the sunshine each day and particularly the beautiful sunsets, it is easy to forget November.

But as I walk and drive around town I see folk are taking advantage of the lovely days to hang Christmas greens and decorations. We hung out ornaments on our tree, in front as we have done for the past five years. Trees don't get shorter and so the ornaments are spread out a little higher and further.

As my hubby reminded me, at least it was not the usual snowstorm when we were doing this.

We bave a habit of leaving until it is miserable to work out doors, so this year we were more prepared. Maybe we are morphing into those ever ready and hard working squirrels.

My dad told tales of prairie winters and tbe importance of being prepared because weather could cbange in an instant. So keeping that in mind, this week we'll chat about being ready for cold and flu season. Somehow that combines with the first cold spell.

I believe we need to use prevention to help fight off the flu and colds. So keeping a regular pattern of proper sleep, plenty of liquids and some herbal prevention does help. Some folk take supplements to help increase their immunity. Every little bit of prevention is good. And if you should get the flu or cold the following may help brighten your day or evening rest.

Bring out those candles to lighten the early dark. And with a cup or two of this tea (see box) and a good book, you can rest and refresh until you are back on your feet.

Lots of walks through the bush this week and along the beach where the wave action was pretty awesome. A few passes through the garden to see the remaining nurturing plants doing their job. And a view of one remaining blooming rose in November.

Life here is sweet, I hope we remember that each day.

Thanks to so many of you good folk for staying in touch and sharing all your thoughts. Happy thanksgiving to our American family and friends.

Until next time, keep growing.

Ruth Vold Markle is a member of the Fort Erie Horticultural Society.

FRESH HERB TEA

- 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves
- 2 tbsp fresh basil
- 2 fresh sage leaves
- 2 fresh thyme leaves(about 5 in each)
- Lemon grass bulb (stalk and root removed)
- 1 inch thinly sliced piece of ginger root
- 1 1/2 tsp of finely grated lemon zest
- 6 cups boiling water
- 1 to 2 tsp liquid honey(optional)

Rinse large teapot with hot water to warm.

Add the first seven ingredients. Pour boiling water over the herb mixture.

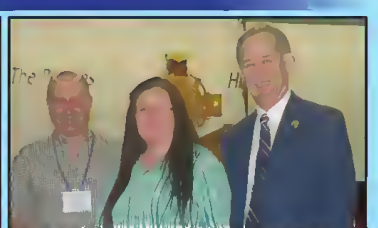
Cover. Let stand for 10 minutes. Strain through the sieve and add solid contents to compost.

Add honey if you choose. The recipe makes six cups, which is enough to keep you and yours refreshed for awhile.

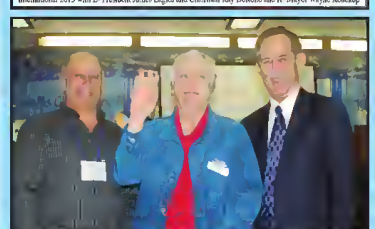
INTERCEDE INTERNATIONAL

Volunteers of the Year

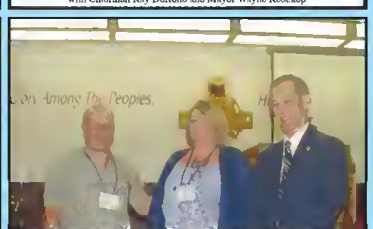
Sharon Eagles Volunteer of the Year Award with Granddaughter and Volunteer Lexie Gill Intercede International 2015 with L- President Janice Eagles and Chairman Ray Dortono and R- Mayor Wayne Redekop



Becky Vanderwyk Intercede International Volunteer of the Year 2015 with Chairman Ray Dortono and Mayor Wayne Redekop



Corinne Blackwell Volunteer of the Year Award Intercede International 2015 with L & R Chairman Ray Dortono and Mayor Wayne Redekop



Karen Krawczyk Staff 30 Year Milestone Award Intercede International 2015 with Chairman Ray Dortono and Mayor Wayne Redekop

Lori Alvin Volunteer of the Year Intercede International 2015 with L&R Chairman Ray Dortono and Mayor Wayne Redekop

Victor Alvin Volunteer of the Year Award Intercede International 2015 with L & R Chairman Ray Dortono and Mayor Wayne Redekop

On Tuesday, November 17th, Intercede International, a Fort Erie Christian faith based national mission charity, held its annual Volunteer and Staff Appreciation Night at the All Nations Mission Centre in Ridgeway. A banquet was served by Brian and Jane Duggan Catering and awards were given out to all Intercede Volunteers. Over the past 12 months Intercede has been blessed with many Volunteers who gave of their time and talents. We appreciate Mayor Wayne Redekop's visit to show the Town's appreciation to all the Volunteers.

Altogether in 2015 our 31 Volunteers contributed collectively 1200 man hours of work. Every year Intercede also recognizes certain Volunteers to be our Intercede Volunteers of the Year. This year the five Intercede Volunteers of the Year were: Lori Alvin, Victor Alvin, Becky Vanderwyk, Sharon Eagles, and Corinne Blackwell. This year two individuals were also honoured for their Milestone of Distinguished Volunteer Service Years to Intercede International.

The 10 Years Milestone Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service was given to Rev. John Lucas and Rev. James Okot.

Also this year Intercede Staff member Karen Krawczyk was honoured with a Staff Milestone Award for her 30 years of dedicated service to worldwide missions through Intercede International.

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Happy Holidays

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New scarves, hats, mittens and books needed

Sarah Ferguson
Fort Erie Times

Every child deserves a new pair of gloves, a warm scarf, and a hat during the winter months.

To make sure that happens, the Fort Erie Public Library's annual Mittens and Books collection is back at all three branches.

Debbie Ashworth, head of the Stevensville branch, started the collection as a way to give back to the community.

"I have always believed that charity begins at home and the best part about this collection is that it all stays local, which is important to a lot of people," Ashworth said.

For more than 20 years, library patrons have been invited to bring in newly purchased or handmade items and books for children and teens. The items decorate Christmas trees at all three of the library's branches until the items are bundled together and given to the Salvation Army, Saint Vincent de Paul and the Kinsmen Gift of Love program to distribute the items to children in need at Christmas.

The collection continues until Dec. 13 but library staff will accept donations up until Christmas.

"If someone comes and donates something after our deadline, we will try our best to make sure it gets to a child who needs it."

Last year, the Mittens and Books collection distributed about 1,800 items to youth in Fort Erie.

For more information call the Fort Erie Public Library at 905-871-2546.

sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca

Sarah Ferguson/Fort Erie Times

Pauline Johnston, a public service worker at the Stevensville branch of the Fort Erie Public Library stood beside the Mittens and Books collection. The public is invited to donate items to decorate the tree until Dec. 12 when they will be distributed to local charities and given to families in need.

▶NEWS BRIEFS

Donations needed for toy drive

Staff at Robinson and Associates Insurance, at 264 Ridge Rd. North, in Ridgeway are collecting toys and food to help families in need this Christmas.

New and unwrapped toys are needed for infants and children ages 12 and under. Other items include gift cards and Canadian Tire money, which will be used to purchase toys.

Food items that are needed include stuffing, cranberries, canned vegetables, potatoes, cake mix, cookies, icing, pancake mix, syrup, peanut butter, jam and cereal.

All of the donations that will be collected will be given to the St. Vincent De Paul Food Bank at St. George's Church.

For more information call 289-876-8111.

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Happy Holidays
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From all of us here,

Author to launch new book at museum

Sarah Ferguson
Fort Erie Times

The Battle of Ridgeway was one of the most important battles in Canadian history.

That's why Earl Plato, a local author and historian, felt it was important to tell the story in his new book *Terror at Snake Hill: Battle of Ridgeway 1866*.

"It's so downplayed," Plato said. "None of the history books really talk about the Fenian Raids but it was one of the most important battles that led to the creation of our nation. It was an important turning point."

Plato is set to debut his latest book at the Fort Erie Historical Museum this Friday during a book launch and signing from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

He is also part of the museum's new exhibit, Made in Fort Erie. The exhibit highlights centuries of diversity, creativity and production in Fort Erie.

Plato, a self-described "history nut" said the late Bert Miller, who was once the curator of the Fort Erie Historical Museum, acted as his mentor.

"He was a nature lover and often took me down to Marcy's Creek. He was the key to my passion for nature and history."

Plato has also written a number of historical books including An Early and Local History of Fort Erie and Niagara and The Siege of Fort Erie 1814: The Destroyer. These books will also be for sale at the museum.

For more information, call the Fort Erie Historical Museum at 905-894-5322

sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca

WHO: Fort Erie resident and local historian Earl Plato.

WHAT: Plato will launch his new book *Terror at Snake Hill: Battle of Ridgeway 1866.*

WHEN: Friday, Dec. 4 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

WHERE: The Fort Erie Historical Museum, 402 Ridge Rd., North.

Sarah Ferguson/Fort Erie Times

Fort Erie resident and local historian Earl Plato will launch his new book, *Terror at Snake Hill: Battle of Ridgeway 1866*, at the Fort Erie Historical Museum on Friday, Dec. 4 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

No ministry commitment on hospital timeline

Allan Benner
Postmedia Network

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is making no commitments to the timing of building a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls.

Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati stated recently that he believes that construction of the hospital would begin by the end of 2016.

Diodati said his assessment was based on past conversations with Health Minister Eric Hoskins, although the project timelines would need to be announced by the ministry.

But ministry spokesman David Jensen said the timing of the project depends on how quickly the preliminary planning work that is still in its early stages is completed.

"The timelines for implementing the project will depend on the planning parameters established as part of the capital planning process," Jensen wrote in an e-mail, last Wednesday morning. "The ministry is currently working with the hospital and LHIN, and once these parameters have been accepted by the ministry and the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network, Niagara Health.

Soup's on!

Sarah Ferguson/Fort Erie Times

Kayla Jobston, a Grade 9 student at Fort Erie Secondary School, ate a warm bowl of soup Friday. The school's culinary students served up piping hot bowls of soup for an hour last Friday to raise money and donations for the Community Outreach Program Erie Food Bank. Students were asked to contirbute $2 or a non-perishable canned good in exchange for hot soup and rolls. The soup lunch will be served for staff and students each Friday until Christmas.

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Food for thought

Submitted photo

The Pomegranate restaurant's students volunteer their time every fourth Saturday of each month at St.Paul's Anglican Church preparing food in order to serve over 100 lunches. Mr. W. Gates (MPP) was assisting in serving lunch. He emphasized the importance of such partnership between school and community. It is a great opportunity for our students to give back to their community, and participate in a social activity while honing their culinary skills. It was a great day to showcase FESS students while working with our representative from Queen's Park.

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New paramedic hires requested by EMS

Maryanne Firth
Postmedia Network

In response to increasing call volumes, Niagara EMS wants to hire an additional 20 full-time employees to the tune of more than $1 million.

The request was one of 30 items on the regional budget review committee agenda being considered for 2016 funding. Those items, to be chosen by council, were recommended to be paid for using $6.1 million in available growth assessment and provincial uploading dollars.

The operating budget, which was the focus of the meeting, was brought forward by staff with no increase for 2016.

Niagara EMS has requested two additional 24-hour ambulance crews with a total 16 paramedics be hired, along with two logistics and planning staff, and two operations supervisors.

In 2014, regional council approved the addition of two 24-hour ambulance crews, which were implemented by November of that year.

Those additional resources stopped further erosion of response targets and have since improved response times marginally, a staff report presented to council said.

But call volumes continue to rise, creating further strain, EMS chief Kevin Smith said.

"In 2014, we talked about how increased call volume is affecting our resources and that continues today."

The service, which is co-funded by Niagara Region and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, saw a 5.8 per cent increase in calls in 2014, followed by a 6.7 per cent increase between November 2014 and May 2015.

EMS staffing is based primarily on demand. During peak hours, there are 30 ambulances ready to go across the region. At night, that drops to 17.

The cost to hire the 20 employees is pegged at $1,064,729.

"I feel we're rushing things too much here," Niagara Falls Coun. Bob Gale said. Instead of approving or defeating the hires, he hoped to see an external study conducted on the service's operations in 2016.

He felt waiting for the study to be completed, at a cost of upward of $200,000, would not compromise service levels and would provide a better picture of what EMS needs to function more efficiently.

A comprehensive review of EMS was last conducted in 2003-04, Smith said.

Niagara Falls Coun. Bart Maves supported the idea of conducting a review before making any commitments.

In addition to the 2014 and current requests for new hires, a look at the service's 10-year capital plan reveals millions of dollars earmarked for new EMS stations over the next three or four years, he said.

"I'm starting to get a little nervous about the way we're spending money within the EMS," he said, adding "external assistance" may provide more comfort to council when determining whether to move forward with the capital plan and new positions.

File photo

Niagara EMS wants to hire an additional 20 full-time employees.

Fort Erie Coun. Sandy Annunziata agreed with Gale that the issue warranted more council discussion.

"The people we're trying to safeguard through the budget process are the same people who would rely on the very efficient ambulance service," he said, stressing the importance of dealing with the hiring request appropriately.

"We will never do it justice by giving this small amount of time to it," he said, expressing his desire to see the item deferred to a future budget meeting to allow for more in-depth discussion.

That deferral motion was later made by West Lincoln Mayor Doug Joyner and approved.

St. Catharines Coun. Tim Rigby said there have been "extensive discussions" on the topic during public health and social services committee.

"There was time to be dealing with this before," he said, adding he felt "annoyed" that some councillors claimed they haven't had enough time to deal with the issue.

"Attend the meetings, listen to them or read the minutes," he said, adding most items on the budget agenda had been discussed previously.

Council was to meet to discuss the budget on Dec. 3 at 1 p.m.

Mary Poppins swoops into convention centre

John Law
PostmediaNetwork

Jeffrey Rees/Special To Postmedia Network

Karin Johnson stars as Mary Poppins in a new production of the classic opening at Scotiabank Convention Centre Dec. 4.

The world's most famous nanny is heading to Scotiabank Convention Centre.

For its annual December musical, Linus Hand Productions is busting out the flying umbrellas for Mary Poppins, which producer Hand calls his biggest production since Beauty and the Beast eight years ago. With its mix of professional actors and students from Hand's Niagara Falls drama academy, there will be upwards of 60 people on stage.

It's also the most expensive show he has ever secured the rights to. The stage version to the Disney classic was acquired by legendary producer Cameron McIntosh (Phantom of the Opera, Les Miserables) in 1993, and its brand name doesn't come cheap.

"It's a monster," says Hand. "(But) it's as friendly to audiences as any play out there. What I mean by that is, it reaches all age groups."

The show uses elements from both the 1964 Disney film and the P.L. Travers books it was based on, and while some things have been removed, there's one aspect you can still bank on: Mary will fly. So will Bert. It's adding to the workload of an already massive show for director Roxanne Rees.

"That requires more attention," she says. "For safety, and making sure the choreography works with the music. There's also all of the magic tricks — you need that illusion. Mary's got magic, and I've got non-magicians trying to figure out what the tricks are."

The show stars Karin Johnson as Mary and Gavin Bowerman as Bert, along with Kendra Williams (Mrs. Banks) and Preston Vendramin (Mr. Banks). It's at the convention centre for six shows starting Dec. 4.

WHAT: Mary Poppins
WHERE: Scotiabank Convention Centre, 6815 Stanley Ave., Niagara Falls
WHEN: Dec. 4 to 12
TICKETS: Start at $25 for locals, 905-357-7008 or BoxOffice@fallsconventions.com

"Everybody's waiting for Julie Andrews," says Reese. "Everybody has grown up with those wonderful songs — A Spoonful of Sugar, Supercalifragilisticexpialidocous — so it's very important to find the right person. That has that charismatic attitude, the gestures, the posture, that the audience can attach to."

Rees has previously directed Into the Woods and Hairspray for Linus Hand Productions, and was technical director for last December's production of The Wizard of Oz.

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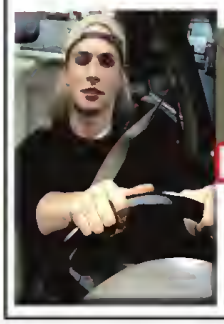

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Pearl Gloves punches above its weigh

Don Fraser
Postmedia

Bob Tymczyszyn/Postmedia Network

Michael Abruscato (blue) and Joshua Frazer (red) box at the Pearl Gloves charity boxing matches held at White Oakes Resort Friday November 27 in St. Catharines.

It was about imposing massive self-discipline, while also doing a good turn.

Paul Tappay had his heart set on fighting at Friday's Pearl Gloves. He knew some serious conditioning was in order.

But the pain would be worth it in an regional benefit for the MS Society Niagara Chapter of Hope.

So Last July, the future amateur competitors got together for some basic training.

Tappay, from Niagara Falls, weighed in at a robust 248 pounds.

"I have never in my life done anything as physically demanding as this," said Tappay, 41. "They put us through a really great regimen."

That ordeal included dieting, boxing, core and cardio training and running.

Four months later, 25 pounds lighter, he comfortably defeated his matchup at the event at White Oaks Conference Resort and Spa in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"For me it was really a life-changing transformation," he said. Tappay laughs that he had friends and family at the match, some who may have come for dubious reasons.

"And I think part of the reason (for some) was wanting to see me have my butt handed to me, but it didn't happen," he said. "And I'm glad it all went to charity."

Pearl Gloves, now in its third year, gets its name from the symbolic pearl ribbon used by the MS Society. It raised $10,000 in 2013, $27,000 in 2014, and upped it $45,000 with about 1,200 spectators present Friday.

Multiple Sclerosis itself is a disease of the central nervous system, with the average age range for those diagnosed is 15-40. Ultimately, the disease can lead to problems in seeing or speaking, extreme fatigue, loss of balance, weakness, numbness or loss of coordination.

Grant LaFleche, Standard reporter and Pearl Gloves co-founder, fought for the third straight time on the charity show, winning a three round unanimous decision over Aaron Rouse of Jordan.

"We fought last year, but Aaron was a different animal this time around" LaFleche said. "It was a very close fight, believe me."

LaFleche said the training experience at Irwin Boxing in Niagara Falls was amazing and every member of the fight team was pushed to their limits.

"It's a different experience than doing a run or bike ride for charity. It's like our coach Billy Irwin always says. 'You don't play boxing.' " LaFleche said. "You have to train for months, four or five days a week. All of us ended up with bruises, black eyes, and bloody noses. But we also know that people who live with MS, a disease that takes their body from them one piece at a time, have to struggle a lot more than that every day. So when we got hurt in training, I think a lot of us kept that in mind."

This year, Pearl Gloves also become Pearl Gloves Promotions Inc., a registered not-for-profit corporation.

Jessica Potts, chair of the organizing committee, said a decision was made to "take this event to another level production-wise."

"And we really did it up," she said, praising superb help from venue host White Oaks and its in-house audio-visual company PSAV.

"White Oaks has got a customer-service culture akin to Disney and they certainly didn't disappoint," she said, adding numerous other volunteers and contributors helped make the event a major success.

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Police handling more mental-health calls

Ray Spiteri
Postmedia Network

Police officers are often looked at as crime stoppers.

But more and more, they're being called upon to deal with mental-health issues in the communities they serve.

"I have been involved in policing locally since 1978 and the degree to which our front-line officers deal with marginalized people, people with mental-health issues, primarily, has increase a thousandfold," said Joe Matthews, deputy chief of Niagara Regional Police.

"While we may spend less time on actual crime suppression because crime rates are dropping, that doesn't mean that there is not a draw on our resources.

"Our calls for service remain steady, but they deal with so many different issues."

Matthews, who addressed Niagara Falls city council last week about current policing issues, said police like to say they are the only social-service agency that's available 24/7.

"We encourage people to call us. Policing has evolved over the years through community policing efforts," he said. "It's a problem-solving service. We welcome that -- that we can deliver those services to the community. But we also recognize that police can't be the be all and end all, and it's up to governments, we believe, to make changes to other resources that can be available to the public.

"Maybe (services) can be delivered more cheaply than having a uniformed police officer respond all the time. Those are the discussions that are going on at the local, provincial and federal levels and we're actively taking part in those discussions."

Coun. Kim Craitor said he saw first-hand how police are helping the homeless and those with mental-health issues during a recent incident in Niagara Falls. Craitor said he witnessed police officers trying to help a homeless person and trying to find that person a place to stay.

"The general public, including myself, tend to think of the police as dealing with crime," said Craitor. "The police are asked to do everything."

The issue of mental-health issues was even discussed during the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in Niagara this past August.

Addressing delegates, Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said the province is under funding mental health, leaving municipalities on the hook for paying for services.

He said Ontario Provincial Police told him almost 40 per cent of their calls last year were related to mental-health issues. In 2013, he said, calls related to mental health cost London police more than $14 million, a substantial chunk of its budget. In that same year, Brown said, Ottawa police apprehended 1,401 people under the Mental Health Act.

But more and more, they're being called upon to deal with mental-health issues in the communities they serve.

"Beyond apprehension, on-duty police officers are spending sometimes four, five, six, seven hours in a hospital until the arrested person is seen by a health-care professional," said Brown.

"When the province under funds mental health, municipalities are paying. The province needs to properly fund mental health to reduce the cost and burden on our cities."

During last week's Niagara Falls city council meeting, Coun. Carolynn Ioannoni, who said she has family with mental illness and has had to call police before, asked Matthews if NRP officers are trained to deal with mental-health issues.

Matthews said officers are trained, but not to the level of mental-health professionals.

He said training has increased in recent years, mainly focusing on de-escalation tactics.

"It's training our officers that when they confront someone with a mental-health issue, how to keep themselves safe, while trying to keep the vulnerable person safe, and the community safe, and then try to respond to get that person the help that they needed," said Matthews.

"In a lot cases, that help comes under the authority of the Mental Health Act where our officers then have the authority to take that person into custody and transport them to a psychiatric facility, and sometimes that's the answer."

He said the NRP is involved in a program where officers work with mental-health professionals when responding to such calls.

"In addition, we're currently involved in a pilot project where there's a mental-health trained nurse actually riding along with our officers.

"All those things are being looked at, not just by us, but by services right across the province and right across the country. Is there always more we can do? Absolutely. But it's come leaps and bounds from where it was."

Ioannoni said she's happy to see police participating in the pilot project.

"There's a difference between de-escalation and cuffing a mental-health person and informing them. That's not always the answer. There has to be a happy medium between the two," she said.

"It's good to see that you're moving along that path. We're not even close to where you have to be, but I'm glad to see that there's a progression."

Striving for a brighter future

Alison langley
Postmedia Network

The car crash not only crumpled her body, but her plans for the future.

The 2006 crash left Shaena Ouderkirk unable to attend school and, after the birth of her two children, she felt her dream of graduating was just that -- a dream.

That elusive dream, however, will soon become a reality as the 25-year-old Niagara Falls resident is about to earn her high school diploma through the support of Strive Niagara.

Ouderkirk has been attending Strive Niagara, formerly known as Adolescent's Family Support Services of Niagara, since last year.

At the Branscombe Early Learning and Family Centre in Niagara Falls, she attends classes based on District School Board of Niagara curriculum while her children, three-year-old Chloe and one-year-old Logan, are in day care elsewhere in the building.

"This program is amazing," Ouderkirk said.

"It has helped me to achieve so many of my goals."

In addition to her studies, she's currently doing a co-op at a local law firm. She hopes to become a paralegal in the future.

Strive Niagara has offices in Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland.

The nonprofit agency began approximately 23 years ago after several educators in the St. Catharines area expressed concern that teenaged mothers were not returning to school after the birth of their children.

The solution was to not only offer courses, but to also offer child care and personal support.

Rachelle Coote, a family support promoter, works with the mothers to complete their high school courses as well as to provide support through life skills classes that cover everything from CPR, parenting and healthy relationships.

"I am their resource," Coote said.

"They tell me what's going on in their lives and I try to bring agencies to the moms."

Strive Niagara can provide child care to clients starting when the child is only six weeks old.

"The sooner mum gets back to school, the less likelihood she'll have a second child and the more likelihood she'll continue with her education," said Sandy Toth, the agency's executive director.

"Many of our mums who complete their high school education with us go one to pursue post-secondary education."

Strive Niagara is also leading the charge in a new program focusing on infant mental health.

When staff received training on infant mental health through SickKids Hospital, they realized that the information they learned would also be important to parents.

"We thought this would really benefit our mums as it is really a parental assessment tool that measures the social and emotional abilities of a child as well as their developmental stages," Toth said.

"It supports a mother in helping her to recognize the development stages for her child."

Postmedia Photo

Shaena Ouderkirk at the Branscombe Early Learning and Family Centre in Niagara Falls, with her children three-year-old Chloe and one-year-old Logan. She attends classes while her children are in day-care elsewhere in the building.

Strive Niagara then formed a committee of approximately 15 agencies that deal with children and offered infant mental health training.

The workshop brought many of Niagara's community service agencies and licensed child-care centre teams together to learn about children's brain development, the identification of developmental milestones, screening for concerns, and best practices for prevention and early intervention.

The training was also offered to local emergency responders -- fire, police and paramedics.

"We wanted to broaden that knowledge to a sector that doesn't necessarily work with kids, but sees kids," Toth said. "They're often the first on site if something happens."

Justin Canestraro, of the Niagara Falls Professional Fire Fighters Association, said members were eager to be involved in the pilot project.

The association also provided financial assistance for Strive Niagara to have informational posters at local fire halls, police stations and Niagara EMS locations.

The posters are designed to increase awareness of the significance of the impact on the trajectory of a child's life when exposed to ongoing toxic stress.

After the training, 20 childcare and early learning program agencies were given an Ages and Stages questionnaire to share with their clients. The results of the information, gathered in March 2014, was submitted to a research committee and the results of the pilot project are expected to be released in January.

Strive Niagara plans to share the research study with both Niagara College and Brock University.

"Both have ECE curriculum courses and we would like them to offer this training as part of the curriculum."

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'These medals have meaning for somebody'

Postmedia Network

More than a year after finding two Canadian Forces medals, Niagara Regional Police are still trying to find the rightful owner.

On Sept. 24, 2014, police executed a search warrant at a Niagara Falls hotel. During the course of the investigation, police located several pieces of stolen property. Two Canadian Forces medals were seized for safe-keeping in the hopes the owner would contact police.

Since then, police have been unsuccessful in locating the owner of the medals.

Police are now asking for the public's help.

One medal was issued to recognize 12 years of military service. The second medal was issued for service overseas on a NATO mission.

NRP Staff Sgt. Lou Greco said the search warrant was looking for drugs. He said in addition to a small amount of drugs, police seized the medals.

Greco said police don't know how the person came to be in possession of the medals, and that as far as he knows, and based on police reports, the person never gave an explanation for how he came to be in possession of the medals.

"Nobody has come forward (to claim the medals). It's very important we find the rightful owner as these are service medals," he said.

Greco said police are not sure if the owner of the medals gave them away.

"If it belongs to someone who is deceased, I'm sure the family would want them," he said.

"It's often we seize stolen property, but these medals have meaning for somebody."

Police ask anyone with information to call them at 905-688-4111, ext. 5107.

Information on crimes can also be submitted anonymously using Crime Stoppers of Niagara. To leave an anonymous tip, call 1-800-222-8477, by texting 274637 with the keyword Niagara, then the tip, or by visiting niagaratips.com. Tipsters are eligible to receive a cash reward of up to $2,000.

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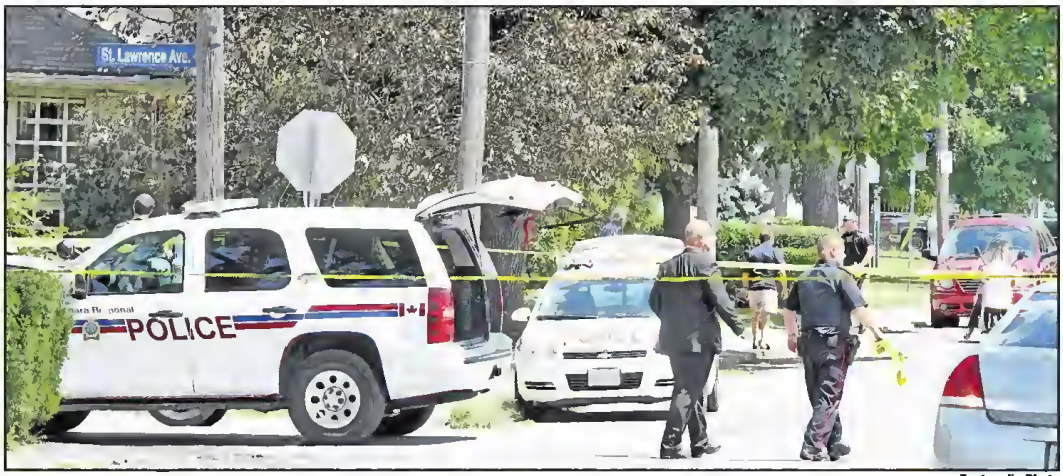

Postmedia Photo

Niagara Regional Police cordoned off the block between Simcoe St., and St. Lawrence Ave., in Niagara Falls, on July 30, 2012. A man was rushed to a Hamilton hospital after being shot in the chest. On Monday Jordan Knott pleaded guilty to charges stemming from the shooting.

Shooter sentenced to eight years

Alison Langley
Postmedia Network

A Niagara Falls man who shot an 18-year-old in the chest in the middle of the street near an elementary school in 2012 will he spending the next 50 months hehind hars.

Jordan Knott, 26, pleaded guilty Monday in an Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Welland to charges of aggravated assault, possession of a restricted firearm, carrying a concealed weapon and possession of a firearm while prohihited. He had originally heen charged with attempted murder.

The charges stem from a July 30, 2012 daylight shooting in a residential neighhourhood that left Zachery Hitchcock, then 18, with a hullet lodged in his chest.

Knott, then 23, fled the city after the shooting and a Canada-wide warrant was issued for his arrest. He was on the lam for almost 10 months hefore heing arrested in Toronto on drug-related offences.

After the guilty plea, Justice Theresa Maddalena sentenced Knott to seven years hehind hars.

Knott had spent 939 days in pretrial custody, the equivalent of serving a 1,400 day jail term.

That was deducted from his sentence, meaning Knott will serve another 50 months in jail.

Court was told a group of males, including a 14-year-old hoy, had heen involved in an ongoing dispute with two males who lived in the same apartment huilding as Knott.

On July 30, according to assistant Crown attorney Andrew Brown, the teenager had an altercation with the two men outside their apartment huilding, which is across from Simcoe Street Puhlic School.

A short while later, a group of four males, including Hitchcock, returned to the area and confronted the two males. The pair sought assistance from Knott who agreed to join the fray against the four males and armed himself with a semi-automatic handgun.

Around 1:30 p.m., the two groups met at Simcoe Street and St. Lawrence Avenue.

"It was a standoff hetween two groups in the middle of the street," Brown said.

"There were challenges on each side to a fist fight."

When Knott hrandished the gun, court was told, Hitchcock thought it was fake and challenged Knott to "drop the gun and fight like men."

Soon after, Knott fired one round, striking Hitchcock in the chest.

He was taken to Greater Niagara General Hospital, then to Hamilton General Hospital.

The hullet did not strike any internal organs, however, surgeons felt it would he too hazardous to remove the hullet.

"The hullet remains inside him," Brown said.

Knott and Hitchcock had never met hefore the day of the shooting.

Defence lawyer Susan Adams said Knott will still he a relatively young man after he completes his sentence and has the opportunity to become a "productive memher of society."

The judge agreed.

"This is an opportunity for you to learn a good lesson and, hopefully, you will take it to heart and we will not he seeing you again," Maddalena told the defendant.

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Niagara drivers 'weren't bad' in Allstate study

Allan Benner
Postmedia Network

The streets of Niagara's three largest cities are relatively safe for motorists.

A new report from Allstate Insurance lists St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls among the top 30 Canadian centres with the fewest motor vehicle collisions in its 2015 Safe Driving Study.

There are 81 centres included in the list. The No. 1 spot on the report went to Spruce Grove, Alta., a city of 32,000 people in the outskirts of Edmonton. Halifaxwas the worst city for motor vehicle collisions, ranked at No. 81.

Among Niagara communities, St. Catharines was the safest with a ranking of No. 15. St. Catharines collision claims frequency was 4.79 per cent, indicating the percentage of every 100 vehicles on the road involved in a reported collision in the past two years.

It's an improvement for St. Catharines which was ranked No. 20 in Allstate's last study, published in 2013.

Welland was ranked at No. 23, with a collision claims frequency of 5.11 per cent. But Welland fared much better two years early, when it was ranked No. 13.

Niagara Falls drivers earned the No. 30 position, with a collision claims frequency of 5.2 per cent. It was an improvement for Niagara Falls as well, which was ranked at No. 33 in 2013.

While Niagara communities could have scored better, Jason Foroglou, an agency manager from Allstate's Courtice-Oshawa office, said the scores "weren't bad."

"I think you guys are doing great" Foroglou said. "You could be doing a lot worse, that's for sure."

He said many factors could have contributed to Welland's drop in the rankings compared to 2013.

"A lot of it is dependent upon weather," he said, noting the past few winters have been severe.

Meanwhile, construction projects can also cause havoc with motorists.

"You get more traffic diverting and you end up with a higher concentration of vehicles on a road, that maybe people aren't used to having that much traffic, and you get some rear-end collisions because of the increase in the number of vehicles on the road in that area," Foroglou said.

There are, however, many things that can be done to prevent collisions.

"Weather can't be controlled, but we can abstain from going out in bad weather. That's probably the best way to not get into a collision," he said.

When staying put isn't an option, Foroglou said motorists should focus on leaving enough space between vehicles in front of them, checking mirrors and reducing speed.

The study showed a 7.3-per-cent increase in collisions across Canada during the past two years.

Factbox:

Rankings
Local
St. Catharines - ranked 15
Welland - 23
Niagara Falls - 30
Southern Ontario
Hamilton - 58
Mississauga - 64
Toronto - 69
Best
Spruce Grove, Alta. - 1
Chelmsford, Ont., near Sudbury - 2
St. Thomas, Ont. - 3
Worst
North York - 79
Ajax - 80
Halifax - 81
A full list can be found at: www.allstate.ca

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Officer sentenced for cheese smuggling

TONY RICCIUTO
Postmedia Network

A Niagara Regional Police officer who has been convicted of a large-scale cheese smuggling operation and breach of trust has been sentenced to four months in jail.

Scott Heron,42, appeared for sentencing Friday in the Superior Court of Justice in Welland.

Heron had been charged with six counts, three of which related to the Customs Act, and three breaches of trust charges that related to his duties as a police officer.

During an earlier court appearance, Justice James Ramsay found Heron guilty on all three of the charges laid under the Customs Act, but only one breach of trust charge.

The court heard the accused had evaded a total of $325,729 in duties and taxes.

The Crown's case depended heavily on the evidence of former NRP Const. Geoff Purdie, who lost his job in April 2013 following his conviction in a Buffalo courtroom on a charge of conspiracy to smuggle steroids from the United States into Canada.

Purdie received a sentence of one year in jail, which he served in an American prison. Part of his plea agreement with U.S. officials was that he would testify in court about the cheese smuggling operation.

Federal Crown prosecutor Amber Pashuk asked for a jail sentence of 15 months. She said neither a fine or a conditional sentence was appropriate given the circumstances of this case.

Pashuk said this was a commercial exercise, and the accused had recruited others to help him with the operation. He also used the police database to get information to find out if there was an investigation.

"He is responsible for his co-actors," said Pashuk. "This is a lot of money. We are not talking about one operation."

She said the aggravating factor was that Heron is a police officer, and this was an on-going crime.

The investigation began in January 2012 and involved Niagara police, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the Canada Border Services Agency.

In the beginning, the investigation focused on Purdie's cross-border activities, and it led to the large-scale cheese and chicken wings smuggling operation. The steroids were being smuggled across the Peace Bridge from the United States into Canada.

Defence lawyer Michael DelGobbo suggested a fine of $30,000 for the smuggling offence and a conditional discharge with probation for the breach of trust count.

DelGobbo said the pre-sentence report was positive and that his client made some bad decisions. Heron was involved in a serious motor vehicle accident in 2009 in which his best friend was killed.

The defence said Heron, who was born and raised in Fort Erie, is trying to get his life back on track, and the publicity surrounding this case has hurt his family.

DelGobbo said his client will still have to deal with the Canada Revenue Agency and Canada Border Services Agency.

The defence said a jail sentence would be a hardship for Heron and his family and that he would like to end his career in a positive way.

When the judge asked Heron if there was anything he wanted to say, he admitted making a few mistakes and also apologized to the police service because they had to put up with a lot of jokes following his arrest.

Heron said he accepted responsibility for what he did.

The judge said this was a crime of dishonesty, and he didn't know how this might affect Heron's career.

"I can't imagine him returning to work anytime soon," said Ramsay. "He is a first-time offender and jail will not be easy on him."

Heron received three months for the smuggling and another month for the breach of trust count.

NRP Police Chief Jeff McGuire attended Friday's sentencing after which he released a statement.

"The involvement of any police officer in criminal activity violates their sworn oath of office," said McGuire. "The reputation of the service is tarnished by this behaviour and public trust is diminished. It is my responsibility to ensure that actions such as those exhibited by Scott Heron are investigated in a professional manner. The facts upon which Scott Heron was convicted are disturbing and are not reflective of the men and women who work in accordance with their oath every single day."

The chief said the service is committed to restoring the trust of the public "which has been defamed by the actions of a few."

Franki Ikeman/Postmedia Network

Niagara Regional Police officer Scott Heron enters the Welland courthouse on Friday September 18 in Welland.

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New theatre one step closer to reality

RAY SPITERI
Postmedia Network

Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. has taken another step toward a new entertainment centre in Niagara Falls by posting a request for pre-qualification to the procurement website, MERX.

The RFPQ outlines an opportunity to design, build, finance and maintain a new, large-scale entertainment complex in the Honeymoon Capital.

Through the process, OLG will pre-qualify proponents that have the required experience, skills and abilities to receive the request for proposal for the opportunity to build the facility.

"We're proud to be part of the Niagara Falls community and want to help ensure the long-term competitiveness of Fallsview Casino Resort and Casino Niagara," said Greg McKenzie, OLG's chief operating officer.

"Non-gaming amenities, like an entertainment centre, are becoming increasingly important for gaming customers. They are essential to a natural tourist hub like the Niagara market."

The Niagara Falls entertainment centre could have approximately 5,000 to 7,000 seats and is intended to attract larger concerts, shows and attractions that will draw more visitors to Niagara Falls and its casinos.

Fallsview Casino currently has a 1,500-seat entertainment centre.

OLG officials said they are ensuring a fair and competitive procurement process that is conducted within guidelines mandated by the provincial government.

Following the close of the RFPQ on Feb. 25, 2016, OLG will evaluate the submissions. OLG expects to release the RFP to pre-qualified proponents in spring 2016.

Mayor Jim Diodati said he has already seen some expressions of interest and believes the OLG will receive some "significant proposals."

Niagara Falls politicians and tourism officials have been pushing for years for a new 7,000-seat entertainment theatre.

A Deloitte study, commissioned by Falls Management Company in 2010 to make the case for why an entertainment theatre should be built in Niagara Falls, noted such a venue would bring in an extra million people per year to the city.

Falls Management was hired by the publicly owned OLG to manage Fallsview Casino and Casino Niagara.

Diodati said with gaming competition increasing directly across the border in western New York — and possibly more competition coming in southern Ontario — an entertainment complex is "exactly what this destination needs."

"It's another piece of the puzzle of taking us from a summer tourism destination to a year-round destination. It will also be a catalyst for more development, a catalyst for more cranes in the city," he said.

"I am very happy that the OLG is moving forward. The city has an extremely good working relationship with (the OLG) and the municipality will remain engaged during this process."

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Teens offer insight into homelessness

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Kailey Augerman will never look at a park bench quite the same.

Where most see a place to stop and sit, the 16-year-old now sees what may have been a temporary bed for someone who has fallen on hard times.

While working on her submission for the Be a Voice contest, the Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School student feels her eyes were opened to the homelessness and housing issues plaguing Niagara.

Meant to raise awareness of the struggles people face locally in terms of shelter, the competition included nearly 60 local high school students, who submitted poems, videos, photos and other mediums to express their views. It was hosted by Habitat for Humanity Niagara, Niagara Regional Housing, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, Niagara Prosperity Initiative, Niagara Region and the local school boards.

The experience taught Augerman, whose photograph took fourth place in the contest, to never assume Niagara is immune from major issues often associated with larger cities.

"There's a lot more homelessness in Niagara than I thought," said Chantal Prince, whose group entry from DSBN Academy took third place.

"You may not see it, but that doesn't mean it's not there," she said.

"And it could happen to any one of us."

Fellow classmate Soleil LaRoche felt the project taught her "not to turn a blind eye" and to be aware of the problems that exist in the community.

She believes her generation, if properly informed, will be able to incite change and address the issue in time.

A group of students from Notre Dame College School in Welland took the top prize with their video introducing the world to Affordable Housing Man.

The lighthearted approach contained a serious message -- that everyone deserves to have a safe and affordable roof over their head.

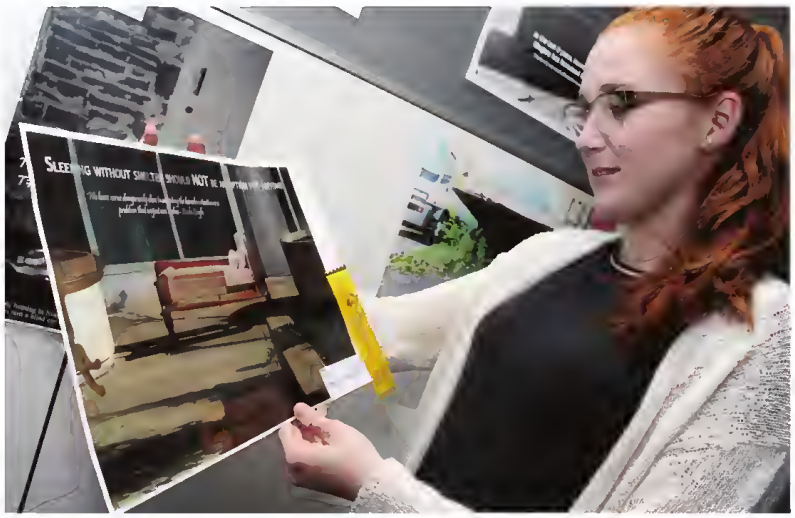
"It's a serious problem in Niagara," co-creator Alex Carullo said.

"Homelessness is something that people know about but they don't want to face."

Sandy Rempel, family services manager at Habitat Niagara, was impressed with the calibre of entries the contest received in its inaugural year.

"The students really did their research to understand the state our area is in with regards to homelessness and affordable housing and came up with some very creative ideas."

maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca
Twitter:@mfirthStandard



Maryanne Firth/Postmedia Network

Kailey Augerman's photograph received a fourth-place mention in the Be a Voice contest facilitated by Habitat for Humanity Niagara to raise awareness of homelessness and housing issues in the region.

Be a Voice winners

First place, $1,000: Notre Dame College School students Kiersten Atamanyk, David Butko, Alex Carullo, Matt Mocha and Chae Porter.

Second place, $500: E.L. Crossley Secondary School students Megan Kanyo, Julia Munro and Morgan Conquergood.

Third place, $250: DSBN Academy students Soleil LaRoche, Lama Rafehi, Naomi Sapezinskas, Chantel Prince, Katana Brown, Hannah Hamil, CJ Warner, Ally Lawson, Angela Paul and Kerry Benitez

Fourth place, $100: Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School student Kailey Augerman.

Fifth place, $100: Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School student Rachel Bannerman.

Seven-month jail term for fraudster

ALISON LANGLEY
Postmedia Network

Going on a Niagara shopping spree using gift cards purchased using someone else's credit card proved costly for a Brampton resident.

Saqib Tariq, 25, will spend the next seven months behind bars for his part in a scheme that used someone else's credit card and a fake driver's licence to purchase gift cards at stores across Niagara.

At a sentencing hearing Friday in Ontario Court of Justice in St. Catharines on Traiq's charges of identity theft, unauthorized use of a credit card and fraud over $5,000, his lawyer asked the judge to consider a 90-day jail term to be served on weekends.

Crown attorney James Coppolino argued identity theft is a serious crime that deserves a jail term of at least 10 months.

"Fraud and identity theft are offences against the public," he said.

He noted a second suspect in the case, 30-year-old William Manzara, pleaded guilty at an earlier date to similar charges and received a seven-month jail term.

"This is happening way too often and it's a public concern," Coppolino said.

"The public should be protected."

Judge Peter Wilkie agreed and imposed a seven-month jail term followed by probation for 18 months.

"Identity theft is very serious and it causes a lot of misery to people whose identity is stolen," he said.

Court heard Tariq went to Future Shop in St. Catharines on Feb. 18, 2014, and used a credit card to purchase a $2,000 gift card. When asked for photo ID, he tendered a fake driver's licence.

Less than a half-hour later, he tried to purchase three iPads at the Niagara Falls Future Shop location using the gift card.

Staff at the St. Catharines store had grown suspicious over the initial purchase and had contacted nearby stores to warn them to keep an eye out.

Staff in Niagara Falls called police and Tariq and three other men were arrested in the store parking lot.

Police seized a number of credit cards as well as gift cards from stores such as Walmart and Best Buy and merchandise including a quantity of alcohol from the LCBO.

All told, more than $5,000 in gift cards and merchandise was seized by police.

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New home for old cabin

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

A centuries-old timber frame cabin has a new home at the Port Colborne museum.

The cabin, discovered within a Miller Road home that was being demolished a year ago, was placed on a new foundation on the museum grounds last week.

It will eventually be used as "a weaving shed," after more than year of renovations are completed, said museum curator Stephanie Powell-Baswick.

"It was discovered in a house when they were demolishing it, and very quickly a decision was made to bring it here," she said.

Although the museum is still researching the history of the cabin, she said museum staff believe the building is more than 200 years old.

"It's a unique building for us," she said. "We have other log cabins, but this is a timber frame cabin, which is a little different."

She said the size of the cabin — 24 by 20 feet and one and a half storeys tall — is unique among cabins built in that time period.

When the museum closes for the season in January, Powell-Baswick said, there will be more time to conduct more in depth research on the history of the structure.

She said discovering historic buildings within old homes is not unusual during renovations.

"A lot of the other buildings that we have on our grounds that have been moved to the museum were discovered during renovations or someone was doing a teardown."

For instance, she said, an old log school house now at the museum was found in Humberstone when someone was restoring their home.

"They found these big beams and thought, there's something here. Through records, we were able to find that it was a schoolhouse," she said.

Last month, as the new timber frame cabin was moved onto its new foundation, a woman visited the museum who said the old building used to belong to her grandparents, she said.

"She remembers as a young person going into that log cabin before it was built up bigger."

When the renovations are complete, a weaving loom currently stored in a log cabin on the property will be put on display within the new building, Powell-Baswick said.

"One of the things on our strategic plan was to acquire a building where we would interpret weaving specifically.

"Rather than having everything ready and then finding a cabin, it went the opposite way," she said. "We found a cabin and we're moving towards the goal of having it open for 2017, for the 150th anniversary of Canada."

Franki Ikeman/postmedia network

Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum curator Stephanie Powell Baswick is pictured with the museum's new old log cabin, which had been found inside a home.

Powell-Baswick said the renovations will include "structural improvements, a new roof and we're also going to work towards making it an accessible building."

The project will also include landscaping, as well as interior furnishings.

"It's going to be a hands-on building in terms of people being able to try their hand at weaving, spinning. We're hoping that it's also an educational tool."

While renovations are underway, the museum will also be raising funds to pay the yet-to-be-determined cost of the work, Powell-Baswick said.

"We didn't have a pot of gold waiting for this, so the fundraising campaign is ongoing in terms of once we meet our goal, we go to the next goal which is why I predict it will take that long."

She said the cabin was transported to the museum grounds last year, disassembled into two pieces to fit across the Clarence Street bridge.

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Franki Ikeman/Postmedia Network

Bridge 19 is pictured on Tuesday November 24, 2015 in Port Colborne, Ont.

Bridge repairs to follow canal closure

Greg Furminger
Postmedia Network

Long-awaited repairs to a Port Colborne canal crossing put out of commission at the end of September are expected to start about five weeks from now.

St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. has confirmed the Welland Canal will close for its shipping season on Wednesday, Dec. 30.

As was the plan for repairs to Bridge 19 on Highway 3, work will commence "in earnest" following the closure, seaway corporation spokesman Andrew Bogora said.

The Welland Canal span on the city's Main Street sustained extensive damage Sept. 30 when it was struck by the cargo ship Lena J. It has been closed to traffic ever since, but has been accessible to pedestrians.

Bogora couldn't say how much the bridge repair will cost, but said Tuesday "damage is a little more severe than the initial survey indicated." That damage includes to the structural steel of the span.

Seaway officials are acutely aware of the impact the bridge closure is having on motorists and nearby businesses, he said.

Meanwhile, for motorists, the seaway this week upgraded its bridge status information available through its website and smartphone app.

While Niagara bridge information had been posted in green for available or red for unavailable raising or lowering, akin to traffic lights, an orange designation now indicates available but raising soon.

Bridge information, and other seaway details including vessel transits, can be found at www.greatlakes-seaway.com.

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Brick for not recognizing Remembrance Day

A brick for a grocery store in Fort Erie not to recognize Remembrance Day on November 11th. It was very sad that there was no moment of silence to remember the soldiers who fought for us and the ones that continue too. Do you not realize you would not be business owners to a chain grocery store if it wasn't for the soldiers that fought in the front lines for your future and freedom? Shame on you and not only to your staff but the owners who were present in the store that day. I guess business as usually for you. You need to get your ducks in order or should I say your bananas!! So disappointing!

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Bouquet for retail staff

A great big bouquet for all the retail people out there who "tolerate" the sometimes impatient consumers-remember, they have families to go home to each and every night too.

Bouquet for Ridgeway man

A bouquet for a Ridgeway man in a grey truck who provided necessary light from his headlights to assist us in finding a missing item previously lost on our walk. We want to thank him for his shining light in the darkness.

Bouquet of thanks

A big thank you to the community members, friends and family who came out to support the Ridgeway Crystal Beach Comedy and Pasta Dinner, Saturday, November 7. Your support, and donations to the Kinsmen Gift of Love were greatly appreciated.

Brick for not hiring local

A brick for any club or organization that hosts events here in Fort Erie but do not hire local caterers. Shame on you.

Brick for drivers who park where they aren't allowed to

A brick for the people who continually park in places where they are not supposed to. If people continue to park in our exit, we will have to put up a 'no parking sign' and have cars towed when we shouldn't have to.

Brick for people who litter

A brick for the litterbugs who like to smasb beer bottles and leave you empty beer cans in our parking lot. If you could refrain from doing so that would be great. Thanks.

Brick for a driver

A brick for the person who pulled out in front of my vehicle and made me slam on my brakes. Then you proceeded to drive 20 km under the speed limit. You are not a very good driver—I hope you realize this. Pay attention when behind the wheel or someone will get hurt.

Bouquet for young man who returned a phone

A bouquet for the young man who found my son's phone on the side of the road and was honest enough to want to return it to the rightful owner. Thank you for your kindness and willingness to personally give it to me. Your employer should be proud as well to have you as a caring individual. Continue showing your good character in all you do in life.

Send your bricks & bouquets to: sarah.ferguson@sunmedia.ca or mail them to Fort Erie Times, 336 Central Ave., Fort Erie Ont., L2A 3T6

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Newest U.S. warship travels canal

Greg Furminger
Postmedia Network

America's newest warship, the USS Milwaukee, made its maiden voyage through the Welland Canal Saturday.

The combat ship, which is intended to patrol coastal waters, was commissioned Sunday, Nov. 21, in Wisconsin, and made a three-day stop in Detroit, en route to the Atlantic Ocean.

It was met by hundreds of people as it entered the canal at Port Colborne at about 10 a.m. Saturday.

According to the America's Navy website, the ship has a San Diego-based crew of 104 people.

It is expected to be in service for at least a quarter-century.

USS Milwaukee has a sister ship, USS Detroit, which will be commissioned in Detroit next year.

The website said the ship is to head south along the east coast to the Panama Canal then to the port of San Diego.

Greg Furminger/Postmedia Network

USS Milwaukee makes its maiden voyage through the Welland Canal in Welland.

Creative Spirituality

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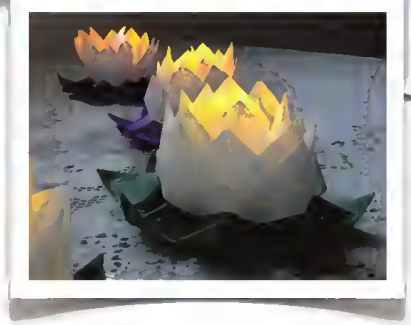

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Sherkston Shores cottages damaged by fire

Postmedia Network

Postmedia photo

Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services' truck sits inside the firehall in this file photo.

A number of cottages at Sherkston Shores Resort were damaged by fire last Tuesday night, including at least one destroyed by flames.

Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services Deputy Chief Mike Bendia said although an investigation into the blaze is ongoing, it will be difficult to pinpoint a cause because the trailer in which the fire started was reduced to a steel frame.

Another trailer may also be ruled a writeoff after fire spread to it, while two other cottages sustained heat damage, Bendia said.

Sherkston Shores put the number of damaged trailers at five.

Firefighters were dispatched to the private resort at the end of Empire Road at about 10:15 p.m. Tuesday. Sixteen local firefighters fought the blaze, with mutual aid, including a tanker truck and other personnel, provided by Fort Erie Fire Department.

Firefighters remained on scene for three-and-a-half hours.

Depending on structural assessment of the damaged units, Bendia said the damage total could come in about $150,000 to $200,000.

The fire at the sprawling resort was detected by Sherkston Shores security.

"Two cottages in the Eberly Woods neighbourhood were heavily damaged and three in the Mariner Crescent area sustained heat damage," the resort said on its Facebook page.

The neighbourhood is the resort's southwest, toward the Wyldewood Beach area.

No foul play is suspected, Sherkston reported.

"All vacation cottage owners whose cottages were damaged have been notified," the resort said to its Facebook followers.

"We are thankful no one was in the cottages at the time of the fire. Please join us in extending our sympathies to those with lost and damaged cottages."

At least 80 percent of all fire deaths occur in home fires. Here are some smart Fire Prevention tips for protecting yourself and your family:

✔ Never leave candles burning unattended, and keep matches out of reach from children.

✔ Keep space heaters away from curtains and other flammable materials

✔ Install smoke alarms on every floor of your home and outside each bedroom, and test batteries monthly.

FIRE PREVENTION SMARTS

The public's help is needed this year as always, in purchasing an unwrapped gift for a boy or girl, infant to 16 years old. As part of our new special program we are also asking for you, the caring people of Fort Erie, to purchase non-perishable goods to support the Salvation Army food drive. We invite the public to use either our Kinsmen or the Salvation Army barrels placed at convenient locations throughout the Town as drop-off points between November 25th & December 20th. You may drop off your Gift of Love at the Salvation Army Kettle Stands & at the following locations:

• Old Bank Bistro • Wal-Mart • Brodies Drug Store on Ridge Road in Ridgeway
• Scotiabank • Royal Bank Ridge Road in Ridgeway
• The Fort Erie Times • McGregor-Miller in Stevensville

by December 20th please!!!

KINSMEN & THE SALVATION ARMY

Closed-door meeting ruled illegal by ombudsman

Maryanne Firth
Postmedia Network

A closed-door meeting held by a Niagara Region task force in May has been deemed illegal by the acting Ontario ombudsman.

Barbara Finlay has completed her investigation into the inaugural meeting of the Region's long-term care task force, ruling it contravened the open meeting provision of the Municipal Act, as well as the Region's procedure bylaw.

Public notice of the meeting was not provided, no procedure was followed to close the meeting to the public, and the task force's discussion did not fall within any of the closed-meeting exceptions, Finlay's ruling reads.

Neither the agenda nor the minutes of the meeting were made public, the document states.

The investigation was launched following a June complaint.

Niagara Region responded to the ruling with a news release, saying the breach occurred "unintentionally" and "can be directly attributed to the ratio of elected officials to staff and members of the public present at the meeting."

The terms of reference approved by council indicated the task force, formed to look into alternative service delivery models for area long-term care homes, consisted of four regional councillors, two members of the public witb industry knowledge and three regional staff members.

The minutes from the meeting, however, indicate the task force included five councillors and five staff members. No external representatives were in the attendance or listed as task force members.

During the meeting, the task force decided to request that three industry experts, as well as two additional staff members, be included in the group.

In response to the Ombudsman's findings, the terms of reference for the task force have been amended to align with the Municipal Act and a regional procedural bylaw review committee established with a mandate to develop recommendations for change.

"We fully cooperated with the ombudsman and respect the findings of the report," Niagara Region chief administrative officer Harry Schlange said in the news release.

"Our priority is to ensure this work will comply with all procedural rules moving forward."

"We firmly believe that working collaboratively with council representatives and industry experts will lead to best-in-class options for council's consideration. These kinds of partnerships are key to our success."

In the report, Finlay recommended task force members be vigilant in ensuring compliance under the Municipal Act and the Region's procedure bylaw; that notice of meetings is provided to the public in advance, in accordance with the Region's procedure bylaw; that no subject is discussed in closed session unless it clearly comes within one of the statutory exceptions to the open meeting requirements; and that the minutes of the May 13 meeting be made public, as well as minutes from other task force meetings.

A memorandum regarding the ombudsman's findings is included on Thursday's council meeting agenda.

The full ombudsman's report is available online at www.ombudsman.on.ca/Resources/Reports/Region-of-Niagara.aspx.

Julie Jocsak/Postmedia Network

Niagara Regional Council meets in this file photo.

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Junior B hockey midterm grades

Bill Potrecz
Postmedia Network

It's already the midway point of the Golden Horsesboe season whicb means it's time for the annual mid-term report card.

Each team will be given a grade anywhere from A to F based on its performance in the first half of the season.

Grades will be given based on expectations as well as the record. For instance, a .500 record for a team expecting to contend would be given a failing grade while the same record for a team thought to be in a rebuild would be given a higher grade.

Here's a guide to the grades:

A: Outstanding.
B: Solid.
C: Satisfactory.
D: Barely passing.
E: A long way up.
F: Why bother?

Let's start at the top with the Caledonia Corvairs.

The Corvairs, two-time defending Sutherland Cup champions, appear well on their way to contending for a three-peat.

The Corvairs are off to an astounding 22-1-1-1 start, with their only regulation loss at the hands of the St. Catharines Falcons.

Caledonia feature a deep, talented group of forwards led by GOJGL scoring leader Corey Pawley. Matthew Hore and Blake Luscombe are also in the top 10. Overall, the Corvairs lead all 26 GOJHL teams in goals scored at 149. They are also the most penalized team by a long shot with almost 900 minutes in penalties.

Coach Mike Bullard has shown he is able to mold a group of talented players into a cohesive unit capable of winning.

Grade: A+.

St. Catharines Falcons

The Falcons, who have played the fewest games of any team in the GOJHL to this point, have fashioned a fine 14-4-1 record. Two of those losses have come at the hands of the Fort Erie Meteors.

Overall, the Falcons have displayed a good work ethic most nights. When they are on their game, they can be as dangerous as any team as proven by their win over the Corvairs.

While Caledonia bludgeon opponents with their offence, the Falcons are built around their defence. St. Catharines, led by goaltender Joel Horodziejczyk, have permitted just 38 goals so far, a average of just 1.73 goals per game.

The Falcons will win and lose with their defence but also feature enough offence to get the job done led by leading-scorer Nicholas Dozzi.

St. Catharines coach/general manager Frank Girhiny recently brought in veteran coach Chris Johnstone to help out on the bench, a wise move which could pay huge dividends come playoff time.

Grade: A.

Ancaster Avalanche

Perhaps the biggest surprise so far this season, the Avalanche have compiled a stellar 16-5-2-2 record and .720 winning percentage.

The Avs have been able to put the puck in the net — their 107 goals are second only to Caledonia — led by former Niagara IceDog and Thorold Blackhawk Ben Hughes, who has 34 points in 22 games. Add in Ryan Cox (14-16-30), Matt Manella (5-25-30) and Owen Burnell (12-17-29) and Ancaster has more than enough firepower.

Coach Ryan Kuwabara has done a masterful job so far and would have to be considered a leading candidate for coach of the year.

The fact the Avs have done so well despite the tragedy of losing captain Luke Zupan earlier this season makes their start even more impressive.

Grade: A-.

Welland Junior Canadians

The Junior Canadians have had an inconsistent start at 11-10-2, looking solid at times and not so good at others.

Coach Keith Osborne's club has displayed a strong enough work ethic most nights and are also very disciplined — they are the least penalized club in the Golden Horseshoe by a long shot.

The Junior Canadians aren't particularly strong at one end of the ice or the other. They have scored 70 but given up 69. Jack Fitzgerald (14-13-27) is their only skater in double digits. Defencemen Nathan Farris and Nathan MacDuff have had strong starts, particularly on offence.

The Junior Canadians have been middle of the pack all season and will likely end up there come the end of the regular season.

Grade: C+.

Niagara Falls Canucks

The Canucks have also had an up and down start at 11-12-1.

Coach Frank Pietrangelo has worked hard to revamp the roster since the start of the season bringing in likes of Johnny Curran, Austin Bottrell, Evan Denley, Kevin Boyd and Scott Grieve.

Mattbew Mardsen is having a strong start leading the team in scoring with 15 goals and 26 points in 22 games.

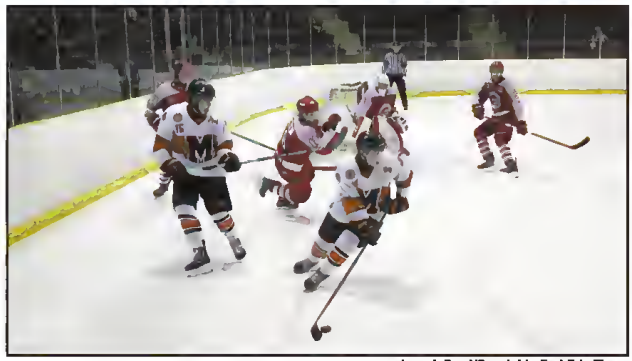
Saginaw draft pick Joseph Murdaca has a 3.36 goals-against average and 6-9-1-1 win/loss record so far in goal. Adam Dentico has done a good job as back-up with 5-3 record and 2.58 goals-against average.

The Canucks are still looking to get on a roll and string together several strong performances.

Grade: C+.

Thorold Blackhawks

The Blackhawks are approaching the .500 mark at 10-14-1-2, but have yet to display enough consistency to be considered a legitimate contender come playoff time.



Joseph Burd/Special to Fort Erie Times

Fort Erie Meteors Danial Singer (16) steels the puck, setting up the defence for an attempt to put one on the scoreboard. The Meteors fell to the St. Catharines Falcons 7-0.

Defenceman Tyler Sehovic is leading the team in scoring and should be a league all-star, but overall the Hawks give up too many goals (98 in 27 games) and can't make up for it with their offence.

Josh Astorino is a solid goaltender but needs more protection.

Grade: D.

Fort Erie Meteors

The Meteors sit in seventh spot with an 8-15-1-2 record.

Coach Rob Hubbert's team has shown flashes of brilliance knocking off the Falcons twice and Ancaster once, but generally don't have enough depth, experience and overall talent to hang with the big boys.

The Meteors have some nice pieces on offence with Anthony Passero, Holdent Garlent, Ben Evans, Danial Singer and Manny Manns, but give up too many goals (121).

Hubbert has a history of getting the most out of his underdog teams and being tough to play against in the playoffs, but will need to get his charges to tighten up in their own end.

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Sometimes you have to make the horse drink

Grant LaFleche

You know the old saying, you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make it drink?

Sounds nice, but the truth is that sometimes if the stakes are high enough, you really do need to push the animal's head into water.

It's the kind of approach that paid some dividends for Niagara's public health department in getting vaccination rates up.

The rules of the game were simple: school children needed up-to-date immunization records. If they didn't, they were not allowed to attend classes.

In the spring, 1,674 students were suspended because of incomplete records. Sometimes, this was simple oversight — parents, not family doctors, are legally obligated to inform public health their child was vaccinated, but some parents did not know this.

In other cases, it was because a child hadn't received the required vaccine.

Within days of the suspensions, parents got the records updated and nearly half of the suspended children returned to class. Within a few weeks, there were fewer than 20 children still out of school.

(There are exceptions to vaccination — a medical exemption, usually because a person is allergic to the vaccine, and conscientious exemptions typically given on religious grounds. Public health says these exceptions amount to less than two per cent of the population. And even then in the case of an outbreak, affected children can be removed from school for their own protection.)

If you think suspending children is too heavy handed, remember Niagara has experienced first-hand what happens when vaccination rates drop off.

In the past few years, we've had whooping cough and measles outbreaks in the region. And asking parents nicely to ensure their kids were vaccinated wasn't getting rates where they needed to be. When the measles outbreak hit earlier this year, public health suspended children to mitigate the spread of the disease.

It shouldn't need to be said, but these diseases are not "mild" childhood aliments.

The dullstones who claim vaccines cause autism or injure the development of a child's immune system are simply spreading ignorant and irresponsible falsehoods.

These are serious diseases that come with tragic consequences. One in 1,000 people who contract measles, for instance, will end up with serious brain swelling. One or two in a thousand will die, and others will develop complications ranging from ear infections to pneumonia.

The reason we didn't have outbreaks — and the tragedy they can bring — for a long time was because vaccination rates were high enough to prevent the spread of disease.

It was really not a surprise, then, that outbreaks returned as vaccination rates dropped off.

The public health department says it took the steps it did not because of the outbreaks, but rather as part of its larger mandate to improve vaccination rates.

And it worked.

In a perfect world, suspending children wouldn't be necessary. The facts of vaccination and disease would be more than enough to keep vaccination rates high.

But human nature being what it is, for better and for worse, it is far from a perfect world.

If school suspensions are what it takes to prevent future outbreaks, then that is what is going to have to happen.

grant.lafleche@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @grantrants

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Garage Sales Flea Markets

St. George's Annual CWL
Christmas Bazaar
Sat. Dec. 5th
9am - 1pm
Parish Hall
56 Ridgeway Rd
Crystal Beach

Miscellaneous

St. Vincent De Paul
36 Jarvis St. 905-871-0203
Used furniture, clothing & household items
Drop off between 10am - 4pm
(After hours drop offs disappear)
We will pick up large items Sat. mornings

Antiques & Art Collectibles

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Community Events

GUN SHOW
Friday December 11th, 6-9:30pm
ADMISSION $5.00
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7 Park Ave. St. Catharines
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Phone 905-562-7686
Sponsored by Sporting Clubs of Niagara

businessdirectory

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CARPETDEALS.CA
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General Services

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LOOK at THIS!
985 Buffalo Rd.
Numerous Power tools for sale
Sat. Dec. 5th
8am - noon

Miscellaneous

WHALE tail for 2013 Chevy Silverado $100. Large dog kennel crate $50. 1500 1lb elec winch $50. Elec knife sharpener $30. 905-991-8637

Community Events

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Holiday Memorial Service

This service will be an opportunity to recognize the lives of those that have passed, regardless of where or when. Please call the funeral home for more information and to have your loved one's name added to the Litany of Remembrance 905-871-0444 or 905-894-1161

Tuesday, December 8th, 2015
Music of the season 6:30pm
Memorial Service 7:00pm
Peoples Memorial United Church
Corner of Ridge Rd. N & Dominion
Refreshments to follow

Wednesday, December 9th, 2015
Music of the season 6:30pm
Memorial Service 7:00pm
St. Paul's Anglican Church
Niagara Blvd. & Gilmore Rd
Refreshments to follow

ITALO CANADIAN CLUB INC. — GRENADA LIBERIA — FORT ERIE

PASTA NIGHT

Thursday December 3rd • 4:30pm - 7:00pm

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- At The Door $10
- Take Out $8
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2nd Thursday of each month PASTA TAKE OUT!

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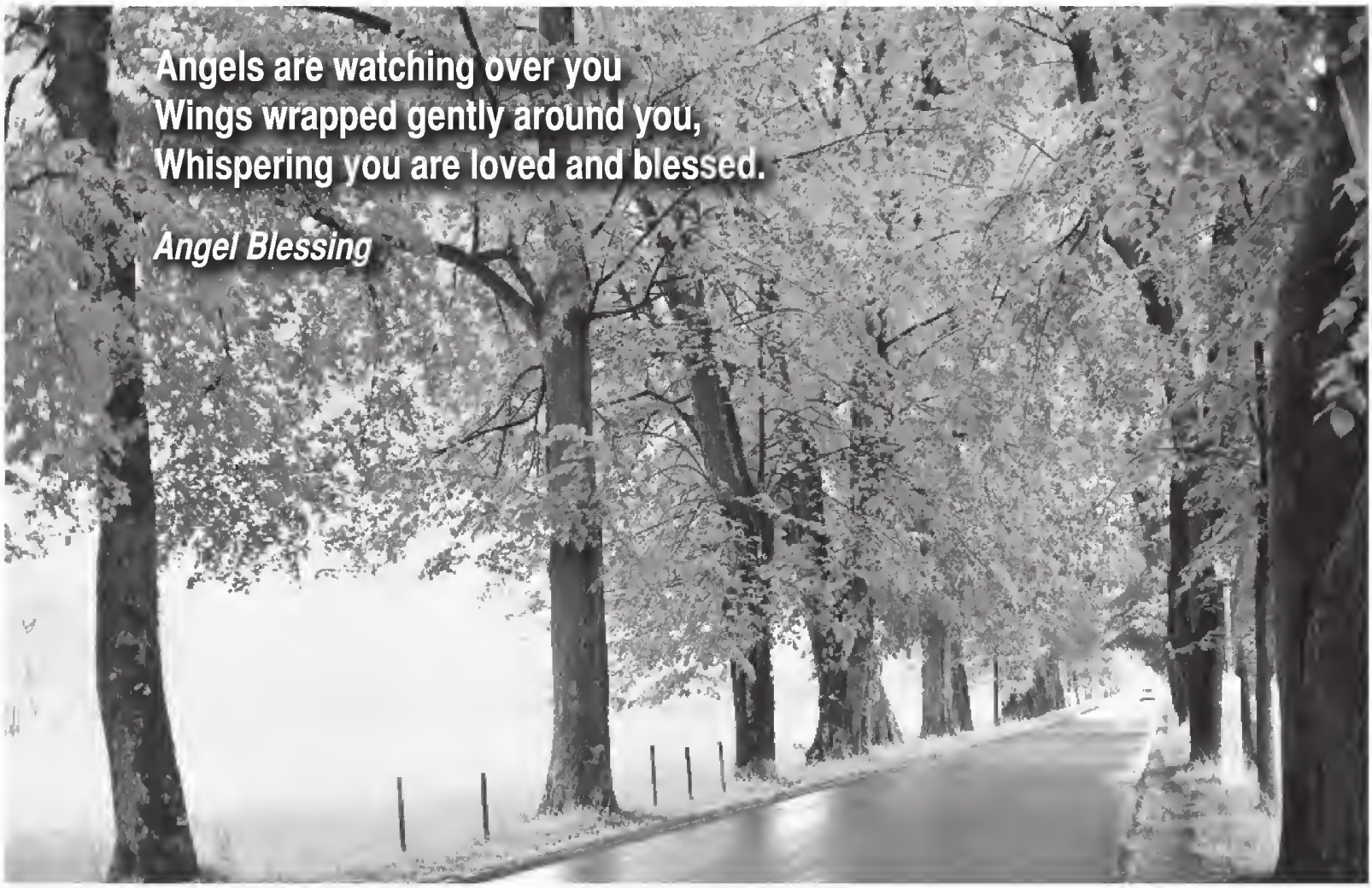

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Marking your milestones.

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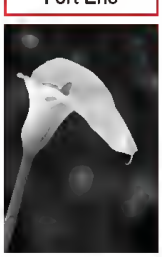
Births

Coming Events

CHRISTMAS MINI BAZAAR
Friday & Saturday
Dec. 4th & 5th
10 A.M - 2 P.M.
Floral & Candy Crafts, Chocolate, mobile Jewellery
CRESCENT PARK LODGE
4 Hagey Ave.,
Fort Erie



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Available Bachelorette

Rebecca is a beautiful, successful 44 year old woman looking for love. She is a Marketing Manager, owns her own home, and is debt free. Rebecca is a divorced mother of one, her daughter, age 20, has recently moved out, leaving Rebecca with an empty nest. She has been divorced for about 5 years, and has been very focused on being a great, attentive mother,and having a successful career. Balancing her job as a single mother, and her career, left her with little time for herself, and even less for dating. With her daughters recent move, she has been given much more free time to enjoy herself and her life, and time to focus on finding a successful relationship. Rebecca enjoys going out for dinner, a day at the spa, yoga, traveling, boating, candle-lit dinners and great conversations. She has a great, fulfilling and joyous life, and while she does not feel as though she needs someone else to complete it, she wants someone to enjoy that with.

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Obituaries

DANISZEWSKI, Christopher Roman - May 16, 1951 - November 26, 2015. It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our Dear Brother, Christopher, on November 26, 2015, suddenly at his home in Niagara Falls, in his 65th year. Christopher is survived by his twin sister, Christine (Fort Erie), brother Anthony (Halifax) and nephew Matthew (St. Johns). He is predeceased by his loving mother Joan (Chadwick) and father Roman Richard. We welcome your attendance at Christopher's Memorial Service to be held at 11:00 a.m., Friday, December 4, 2015 at Benner Funeral Home, 1105 Benner Avenue, Fort Erie. Cremation has already taken place.

McDERMOTT, Karen - Karen passed away at the Greater Niagara General Hospital on Friday, November 27th, 2015 at the age of 72. Cherished sister of Gail (Mervin) Wilson. Sadly missed by niece Valorie Wood, nephews Jim (Joni) Collison and Rob (Lisa) Collison. She is also survived by her great nieces and nephews, other extended family and friends. Predeceased by her friend Al Taylor and her parents William and Dorthea McDermott. **BENNER FUNERAL SERVICES**, 1105 Benner Ave., entrusted with arrangements. A service to celebrate Karen's life was held on Wednesday, December 2nd at 2:00 pm at the Trinity Life Church in Sherkston. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to Trinity Life Church or the Heart & Stroke Foundation.

Funeral Homes

Niagara Funeral Alternatives Inc.
Cremations and Burials
Remembrance Takes Thought, Not Expense
Jerome J. O'Charchin, Funeral Director
905-894-0120
241 Ridge Road • Ridgeway • ON • L0S 1N0

In Memoriams

In loving memory of
Connie Thomson (O'Grady)
July 1960 - December 2009

Your presence we miss,
Your memory we treasure;
Loving you always,
Forgetting you never.

Mom, Dad,
Raymond, Gail, Matthew

Rosalyn Elizabeth Skinner
In loving memory of a dear daughter and sister, who passed away November 26, 1969.

There is a place in our hearts
Which is yours alone
A place in our lives
No one else can ever own
We hold back tears when
we speak your name
But the ache in our hearts
Remain the same

Loved and remembered forever,
Mom, Teresa, and Charles

SIVILOTTI, Enzo -
In memory of my beloved husband, Enzo Sivilotti, who passed away on December 4th, 2006.
Lovingly remembered
and missed every day.
Kathryn and family.

"I'll never forget the doctor asking me, 'Does anyone in your family have cystic fibrosis?' That's the day we found out our sons Jayce and Jaxon both have CF. Today, we can't be silent, because people need to understand the disease, and how important it is to fight back. We always tell our sons, 'You may have cystic fibrosis, but cystic fibrosis doesn't have you'." *Jayce & Jaxon's mother, Angela*

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